

FAITH BRANDON

HENRIETTA
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A NOVEL

BY

HENRIETTA DANA SKINNER

AUTHOR OF

"ESPIRITU SANTO," "HEART AND SOUL," ETC.



"We were created to love the Infinite;
that is why, when we love, that which
we love seems so perfect to our hearts."

LACORDAIRE

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THIS STORY
IS DEDICATED TO
THE FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCE
WHO INSPIRED IT

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PART I

CHAPTER I

THE VISION OF FAITH

"Dost thou recall the glimmering moonlight
On rocks the billows dash with sullen roar,
The rustling trees with drowsy leaves alight,
Close by the garden, on the sea girt shore?
Dost thou recall the freshness of the hour,
The smell of roses and the murmuring brooks,
The music flowing from all nature's smiles ——"
— *Polonsky, "Night in the Crimea."*

FROM the veranda of the Hotel Miramar, picturesquely situated on the wooded heights above the Bay of Yalta, two men were quietly gazing at the lovely scene bathed in the light of the harvest moon. Before them, fragrant with blossoming shrubs, stretched a green lawn girdled by noble cedars and palms. A broad path led to the brow of the hill, on whose terraced sides twinkled myriad lights from the villas and gardens of the gay Crimean watering-place. In the background, like an amphitheatre, rose one upon another the purple crests of the bordering mountains. Below was the sparkling, jeweled bay, its wavelets lapping the feet of white-faced cliffs that gleamed as crystal in the rays of the moon. Beyond the bay, like a great dark emerald, shimmered the waters of the Black Sea.

Surely, a night for lovers' dreams! a scene to evoke sighs

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and protestations of undying remembrance! an hour consecrated to poetry and romance! Yet from the lips of the younger of the two men fell a jarring, discordant note — the unsentimental, prosaic, cynical statement:

“I am in no position to marry, nor have I the slightest desire to seek a wife.”

He was not beyond the age of romance, nor did he look like a man in whom the fires of youth had early burned themselves out. He appeared to be in the prime of a clean, strong, thoughtful young manhood. About thirty years of age, tall and largely built of frame, alert and well-poised of bearing, his face revealed itself in the half-shadow of the moonlit night as being strong and pleasing rather than especially handsome, although the large and somewhat irregular features were well-redeemed from plainness and heaviness by their clear cut, spirited outlines, the short upper lip and the high arch of the nostrils marking a type of countenance generally designated as “aristocratic.” The mouth was shaded by a long, fair moustache, and the short hair that waved about his high-built, well-developed head and clever brow was of the same fair hue. His was a gentleman-like, distinguished figure, with the simple, unassuming grace of manner that is the hall-mark of the highest cosmopolitan breeding.

His companion, a man of some forty-five years, was also fair, but of a bluffer, more florid type. He was inclined to stoutness and was decidedly bald, while his light hair and moustache had a distinctly auburn tint. His genial countenance bore at that moment a perturbed expression. It was evident that he was not in sympathy with his companion's sentiment — or lack of sentiment.

“Come, come! Brother,” he said, gruffly but good-naturedly. “You are making yourself a martyr to your career. I confess I cannot see why it should condemn you to a life of celibacy. Other men in your calling manage to

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have wife and home, and yet do justice to their work and advance in their careers."

"Of what use would wife or home be to me," rejoined the younger man, in a tone of laughing inquiry, "when my principal occupation will be in getting away from both as frequently and as far as possible? I am likely to be sent from one end of the civilized world to the other at an hour's notice, to be gone weeks and months at a time. Pray, where would home and wife come in?"

"Take her with you!" suggested the other. "A wife may be a very desirable traveling companion on occasions."

"It will not be all *trains de luxe* on the special missions of the Foreign Office," retorted the young man, shrugging his shoulders. "Marriage would be difficult enough even if I remained in the diplomatic service, where one is frequently changing headquarters, always exiled from one's country, and bringing up one's children among aliens. But a peripatetic home in trains and hotels is something I have no fancy for, and a woman would probably fancy it even less. It would end in virtual separation. In some unhappy households such separation might not be unwelcome; but it is not of such that you or I are dreaming, Brother."

They spoke to each other familiarly as "thou" and "brother," but it was in the affectionate intimacy of their race and language. There was plainly no relationship between them but that of friend and comrade.

"No true wife begrudges her husband his life work," declared the older man, in the tone of one who spoke from experience. "There are obstacles to be overcome in matrimony just as in any other career; but, believe me, your wife will find her happiness in smoothing your path as far as in her lies. She will realize that you belong to your country and to the public, and that she herself is serving them in serving you. She will go with you when she can, she will spare you when she must."

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The young man's keen, light-blue eyes smiled pleasantly out at his friend from under their long, curved lashes. "You are an enthusiast for matrimony, and rightly so," he said. "But remember, where you have drawn a prize in the marriage lottery others have drawn blanks!"

"Yes, I am an enthusiast. I don't deny it," admitted his friend with hearty frankness. "The family life is God's ordinance. Europe would have a happier, more Christian civilization to-day if all her young men married and founded homes as soon as they were of age."

"It is better to marry than to burn," quoted the other, laughingly. "But you would not thrust all celibates into hell-fire? Some of us may have the sense to keep away from the flames!" he added, with a certain proud disdain in tone and bearing. "You respect celibacy in the cloister. Is it not all a question of motive? What if I believe I can serve my country more disinterestedly, both in my official and my literary life, if I am not bound down by home ties, not obliged for my family's sake to sacrifice my freedom of thought and action to considerations of policy? As a bachelor, I have a heart for any fate. As a married man I should be in continual fear of jeopardizing my position and its emoluments. My patrimony is not large enough to make me independent of a salary if I have others to consider."

"I give you credit for your desire to battle for ideals and convictions and principles," interrupted the older man impatiently, "but it is one thing to fight and another thing to fight well. If you aspire to be of service to humanity you must know and share its sorrows and joys, its trials and sacred rewards. You must yourself be developed by a life of the affections and the soul,—the family life."

The keen blue eyes of the younger man softened. He began to pace the veranda with short, rapid steps. He was singularly light on his feet for one of his height and build,

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and there was an air of mingled grace and energy in his movements.

"I am taking that into account," he insisted. "I have known family life at its holiest and best, its affections and companionships, and the sorrow of their loss. I feel that those hours of desolation, as well as the hours of joy, the prayers at my mother's knee, my father's counsels, aye, and his whippings, too! have all been part of my preparation for the work I hope to do in life. And I am not without present human ties. I have the dear, invalid uncle who has been a second father to me; I have my widowed sister and her little ones; I have friends and relatives to whom I am warmly attached. Will not these suffice?"

His friend also fell to pacing the floor. For a while he was silent, then he broke out earnestly.

"I tell you how it is, Brother. These things have their place in your life, and a very good place it is, but they are not *your own*. We men, whatever our work and however earnest we are about it, fall horribly short of our ideals. Take my own case. My life is thought to be a successful one. I have served in the army with distinction; I have held high office at court; my estate is well ordered; the peasants are healthy and contented. But, have I lived up to my ideals? No! I have had opportunities which I have not grasped, I have not always done my best, and even my best efforts have often failed. Well, I return to my home, my heart heavy with a sense of much left undone; and there I find myself living again in six little lives for which I am responsible. Six little souls to train for their God and their country with all the strength of a father's affection and a mother's prayers, — that is the only real success of my career! In the eyes of others they may appear to be very commonplace children; but in mine they typify Hope, Love, and the redemption of all that is wasted and unworthy in my past!"

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And the good man mopped the perspiration from his bald brow, and was not ashamed of the tear that rolled from his cheek to his broad shirt-front.

The younger man surveyed his friend with a flush of enthusiastic approval. "Heart of gold!" he exclaimed, throwing his arm about the other's shoulders and embracing him with affectionate warmth. Both men were of a race alive with vital human instincts, whose hearts beat more warmly, whose sentiments are expressed more straightforwardly than those of a more coldly calculating and sophisticated civilization.

"I have spoken of my unsettled life," resumed the younger after a moment, in a low, troubled voice, "of my desire for independence. But there is a third reason why I shrink from matrimony. Brother, I am afraid!"

"Afraid?" echoed his friend in astonishment.

"My life, since I entered the diplomatic career," continued the young man, "has been spent in the great-world of our modern courts and capitals, amid the false glitter and fascination of its society. How many fair, young married lives have I not seen morally poisoned by this vitiated air! Yet my home must of necessity be in one of these capitals, where I must leave a young wife, for the greater part of the time alone, exposed to all its worldly and corrupting influences. Shall I shut her up in four walls and make her lead an unnatural life, deprived of all social advantages and companionship? Or shall I give up the labors and interests of my manhood for the sake of a woman's worldly pleasures? Neither course would be reasonable. Yet, if I let her go into this whirlpool alone, I can foresee that the end will be—shipwreck!" His countenance darkened; a bitter smile parted his lips; his blue eyes, usually so keen and pleasant, looked down gloomily.

The older man frowned thoughtfully. "You have had a surfeit of fashionable high-life and have found it — Vanity,

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though I can assure you that the world, flesh, and devil may also flourish in provincial life!" He sighed, then, rousing himself, added cheerily: "But come! Let this glorious moonlight flood into your young heart, which is drying up before its prime! Let the beauty of God's world put a little of the faith and courage of romance into your too reasoning and apprehensive soul!"

"I fear," smiled the other, "that I am a very matter-of-fact fellow. For instance, I enjoy moonlight as moonlight, but I fail to see its virtues in connection with one's matrimonial ventures! If ever I choose a wife, far as that thought is from me at present, it will not be by the light of the moon. It will be by the broad light of noon-day, the choice of careful consideration, and not the sudden fancy of a summer dream!"

"You will choose your wife as God wills!" retorted the other, gayly. "No man can tell when his hour is going to strike. It is upon him before he knows!"

From a distant veranda, across the shady lawn, mingling with the sound of plashing fountain and murmuring waves could be heard the tinkling of a balaláika, accompanying a mellow, baritone voice in the lines of Shenshin's "Tryst."

"A whisper, a gentle sigh —
Trills of the nightingale;
The silver flash of the brook,
Asleep in the drowsy vale.
The shadows and shine of night —
Shadows in endless race;
The sweet of a magical change
Over a sweet young face!
The blush of a rose in the mist —
An amber gleam on the lawn;
A rush of kisses and tears —
And oh, the Dawn! the Dawn!"

The two men, standing quietly together in the deep shadow of the veranda roof, listened till the love song reached its ecstatic close. Then the older man turned cheerily to his comrade.

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“Heart’s Brother, you must have faith! You have not met ‘the one woman’ yet, — that is what ails you! When she steps into your life all your doubts and difficulties will vanish into thin air. At present you are embittered, and I do not blame you; for I, also, know the evils of modern society life in the great capitals. But there are women, and young women, too, who bear themselves unstained through it all. Only choose the right one and then — have faith! Trust her to go her way, as she must trust you to go yours. Let the motto of your married life be ‘*Fides.*’ I repeat — have faith, and again — have faith!”

“I should require Faith indeed!” replied the younger man, with a slightly skeptical smile.

Into the broad path flooded by moonlight, stepped a young girl, advancing toward them with upraised face,— a school-maiden with braided hair, whose yellow frock lacked two or three inches of reaching her ankles. The face raised toward them was serious, almost too serious for its wholesome, childish contours; the magnificent eyes were grave and deep; the young, undeveloped figure was straight and strong; the noble young head was carried with almost regal dignity. She came fearlessly on to the foot of the veranda steps. It was evident to the two men that she could not see them standing in the heavy shadow.

Just over their heads a window was suddenly raised.

“Faith!” called a cheery voice in English; “Faith! is it you?”

The young maiden glanced upward. It seemed to the watching figures on the veranda as if she were gazing directly at them, rather than at the open, lighted window above their heads. Her lips parted in a sudden, radiant smile, a smile transfiguring the youthful face, inundating it with freshness and delight, the splendid eyes luminous with laughter.

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In sweet, musical tones the pleasant, fresh young voice with a rippling note of merriment running through it, called back in soft answer.

"It is I! It is Faith! I am coming!"

She sprang lightly up the steps, straight toward the younger of the two men. In another moment her head would have been against his breast.

He stepped forward out of the shadow. The moonlight fell full on his tall, shapely frame and his fair, strong, pleasant countenance. She stopped short, bewildered by the sudden apparition, and gazed up at him with a shy, startled look in the lovely eyes.

He stood aside, politely removing his hat. Then looking down into the sweet, frightened face below him, he bent his head and smiled, with a reassuringly kind and winning smile, his blue eyes, full of friendliness and mirth, glancing down sideways at her from under their long, curving lashes.

For a moment she continued unconsciously to gaze as if fascinated into the face above her. Then her eyes fell before his tender, mischievous glance; and, blushing deeply, she made him a demure courtesy and with a murmur of apology, half-laughing, half-embarrassed, turned and hurried into the house.

The young man's look followed her with mingled admiration and amusement till she had disappeared into the hall. Then he replaced his hat and, without a word to his friend, walked slowly, thoughtfully down the veranda steps and out on to the moonlit sward.

The older man watched him amazedly, his genial countenance at last breaking into a broad grin.

"I need not have wasted my breath giving him sentimental advice," he said to himself. "He needs no teaching!"

He hastened to join his friend, and they sauntered on to-

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gether a while in silence. Then the younger man's lips parted and he hummed softly:

"The sweet of a magical change
Over a sweet young face!
The blush of a rose in the mist —
An amber gleam on the lawn —"

The older man's shoulders shook and his hand went up to his moustache.

After a moment the younger man turned abruptly to his friend.

"Grigóri Sergévich,"* he exclaimed, "I shall take your advice! I will have Faith!"

The other man chuckled softly to himself. "O Human Nature!" he thought. "Poor Human Nature! How the best-laid plans and the wisest resolutions of the best of men go down before your mighty attraction!"

But what he said aloud was, "Certainly! have faith by all means, my dear Lyéff!† Have all the virtues — Faith in the present, Hope for the future, Love always! But especially have faith in your Destiny, even though," here he smiled broadly and undisguisedly, "even though it meet you by moonlight — 'the sudden fancy of a summer dream!'"

* Gregory, son of Sergius. The accent denotes the syllable on which the stress should be laid. Pronounce Gree-gór-ee Sairg-yáy-evitch.

† Lev, pronounced in one syllable *L'yeff*, Leo or Lionel.

CHAPTER II

LITTLE COMRADE

"Oh, you St. Petersburg conquerors! One glance from your eyes and the women melt."

— *Lermontoff, "A Modern Hero."*

"OH, fie! fie! Shut up in the house this lovely day!" exclaimed a plump, good-humored looking woman, about thirty-three or four years of age, coming into the room in lively, breezy fashion. "Faith, child! put up your writing and drive into the town with me, or you will have pale cheeks and your sisters will scold."

"They will not dare to scold, dear Baroness," said Faith. "It will be their own fault for not taking me to the Caucasus with them."

"Poor little Cinderella!" said Baroness Stourdza, consolingly. "The proud stepsisters have left you behind! But, never mind! You are young yet, Faith, and your turn will come. Your prince will appear before you know it."

Faith blushed deeply and guiltily, embarrassed by the secret consciousness of joy instead of regret at having been left behind. A week ago she had cried with disappointment and a sense of injury when her stepsisters' adverse decision was made known to her; but now she was more than reconciled to her fate, for had not her prince already appeared? Had he not recognized her and smiled into her eyes; and did she not already adore him with all the romantic fervor of sixteen — ardent, hero-worshipping sixteen? Had she not spent a goodly part of the waking hours of the last three days in living over in memory the scene of their meeting,

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or in hiding behind the Venetian blinds of the hotel drawing-room in the hopes of seeing, herself unseen, her hero's tall, fair figure standing on the veranda of the neighboring *dacha** or crossing the green sward of the shady lawn that intervened?

But who shall fathom the heart of a schoolgirl? Was it not equally true that on half-a-dozen occasions, when she might have met him face to face, she had fled from him as one panic-stricken? When he came in to greet the friends with whom she was staying, had she not at his entrance slidden out of the room in an agony of shyness? When he was seen approaching them on the road, had she not invented silly excuses for crossing the street to avoid him? Verily, had he been the *Beast* himself, instead of the *Prince Charming*, she could hardly have tried more frantically to escape from him. What was there in his courteous and agreeable personality that should thus fill her with alarms? But so is the heart of schoolgirl made!

"Now, don't be impatient, child!" said the baroness, as, after inspecting the girl's appearance, she twitched her skirt one way and her belt another and fastened her collar more securely. "You must have more vanity about your appearance."

"Oh, bother!" sighed Faith. "I do not mind how I look!"

"But you should mind," declared the baroness. "These little details of dress show character and good breeding as surely as do manners and morals. Now your manners and morals are all that can be desired, but you are sadly lacking in attention to the little niceties of the toilet that speak for so much."

Faith's lips quivered and her eyes filled with tears. "Since mother died," she said, chokingly, "nobody has noticed how I looked or taken the trouble to teach me how to care

* Summer cottage or villa.

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for my things. I hate wearing my sisters' cast-off frocks, but if I complain they always say 'handsome is that handsome does.'"

"I know, I know," interrupted the baroness, soothingly. "The first day I saw you at your brother's rooms in the British Embassy at Constantinople I said to Kiríll (Kiríll was the baron), 'There is a little girl that needs mothering,' and I was not surprised to find that the ladies you were traveling with were only stepsisters. But I can sympathize with you. I was a wild Irish lass, caring for nothing but riding to hounds, when a dashing young Galician officer came fox-hunting in our county, and whisked me off to spend the rest of my life in all the conventionality of court and diplomatic circles. I, too, had everything to learn, so cheer up! You are under my care now for six weeks, and I am going to give you some points, though, alas, neither your allowance nor mine will permit of ball-dresses and gold coaches! But, come! Our coach, such as it is, stops the way!"

The low phaeton, with its small Tatar ponies and gayly dressed coachman, stood in the court-yard. Faith handed the baroness into the little vehicle and sprang in after her; the Kozák (Cossack) driver signaled to his spirited ponies, and they were soon being whisked rapidly round the long zigzags of the hillside road, for the hotel Miramar stood far above the town, in a commanding position on the slope of the wooded mountain. As the phaeton swung round the sharp curves and jolted them mercilessly from side to side, the two occupants held on to each other with little gasps of alarm or little screams of laughter till they arrived at the foot of the hill, where the steep avenue led into the level main road running through the centre of the gay watering place. Then they gathered themselves together, straightening their hats and skirts; the plump, middle-aged baroness as joyous and breathless as the sixteen-year-old schoolgirl.

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"Now, now! Faith, behave yourself! We are coming into town and shall meet all the grandees. We must lean back, look bored, and try to appear as if this was our own private turn-out which we were tired to death of, and not a hired conveyance which we were enjoying with all our might. Go slowly, driver! slowly!"

Whether she leaned back or stood up, whether she was in the carriage or out, Faith for one delirious moment did not know; for had she not caught sight of a manly figure in straw hat and gray tweeds, walking lightly and rapidly along the street toward them — a tall figure, large of limb and distinguished of bearing, with erect, well-poised head and shoulders, straight, shapely legs, a trim, handsome foot, stepping out with singularly light and sure tread? Accompanying the tall man, running and dancing gayly along to keep pace with him, were two children, a graceful, brown-haired boy of eight, and a blue-eyed, sunny-haired little fairy of a girl a year or two older. The tall man stopped at the kerb and, lifting the straw hat from his thick waves of fair hair, stood still and bowed courteously as the phaeton ambled slowly by.

"May I ask, dear Lyéff Petróvich,* if you are personally conducting a kindergarten?" called the baroness gayly, as she returned his salute with great cordiality.

"It seems I am not the only one!" retorted he, in a mellow, pleasant voice, with a note of laughing inquiry.

"Oh, we are a select young ladies' academy, of which I am the discreet matron," she returned, smilingly, then quickly added in English, "My little friend is Milbanke's half-sister, Miss Brandon. Faith, let me present Prince Solntsoff of St. Petersburg."

Faith crimsoned to the ears. She had shrunk back as far as possible in the carriage seat and had not dared raise

* In Russia all classes address each other by the Christian name and patronymic. The family name or the title are rarely used. Petróvich, i. e., Son of Peter or Pierre.

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her head to encounter the merry gaze of the keen blue eyes she remembered so well. She could shrink no further, neither could she well follow a wild desire to leap out of the phaeton and run away. She could only make a timid little bow to the object of her adoration and, in response to his polite greeting spoken in excellent English, utter some senseless words which stuck in her throat. But the carriage had already rolled by the little group on the sidewalk, the tall man was bowing a courteous farewell, and the baroness was waving her parasol and calling back to him, "We shall come to call on your sister this evening."

"That is too bad," grumbled the baroness. "If I had only seen him in time I would have stopped the carriage and had a little conversation. He looked as if he wanted to speak to us, and he is a man well worth talking to, Faith, a very superior article. We knew him twelve years ago in Vienna when his uncle, Prince Kliázemski, was Russian ambassador there. The young prince was then a clever, studious boy of seventeen, and he has developed into a charming and most cultivated man."

"Oh, why, why did you introduce me?" gasped Faith. "Such a distinguished man does not care to know a little girl like me! You heard him refer to me as a child. He would be bored to death to have to talk to me, and, as for me, I should be stricken dumb if he asked me a question! I shall certainly run away if ever I see him coming."

"Now, Faith, don't be silly! In the first place, he looked very hard at you, as if he would like to meet you very much indeed. I know that look when I see it in a man's eyes. You can't mistake it. In the second place, he has already noticed you about with us and spoken of you to Kirill, asked who you were and for the favor of being presented, and said you had such a sweet voice."

Faith giggled delightedly. "Oh, er — by the way," she

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said, trying to look unconcerned, "were those Prince Solntsoff's children?"

The baroness glanced at her sharply, then gave a little chuckle. "Hem! The prince was a bachelor the last I knew. His widowed sister, Countess Chernyatina, arrived last night with her two children, governess and maid, as you had the opportunity to learn when you were studying the hotel register so closely this morning, Faith!"

Faith reddened and laughed good-naturedly. "But if I am to know them, I ought to be sure of the family relationships," she suggested.

"Well, the elderly, invalid gentleman in the wheel-chair is the former ambassador, their uncle, but he was like a father to them since they lost their parents in childhood. The middle-aged gentleman at our hotel who is with them so much is General Alyónkin, a privy councilor and provincial governor. He is a very distinguished man and has a charming wife and a flock of lovely children. The Kliázemskis and Solntsoffs are all very prominent in St. Petersburg, Imperial chamberlains, privy councilors, and court-grandeess. They are genuine Russian princes, descendants of Ryúrik,* and were sovereign princes in the middle-ages, and fought the Mongols and Tatars and I don't know who all!"

"Oh, what fun!" cried Faith, enthusiastically. "It sounds like a Siénkiéwicz novel, like *Pan Michael* and *Pan Andrei* and all that delightful crowd. And is Prince Solntsoff, too, a fighter?"

"Only with his pen, dear. He is not in the army, but in the Foreign Office. He writes poetry and essays and very brilliant satires. But he has also written some historical

* Roderic, first sovereign of Russia in the 9th century. Prince, "Knyáz," is the highest title of the Russian nobility, corresponding to the English Duke. Nearly all the Russian princely families are lineal descendants of the historic grand-princes and tsars of mediæval Russia. Their names are taken from the lands they governed, as Viazemski from *Viazma*, Obolenski from *Obo-Lensk*, or are derived from nicknames, as *Dolgo-ruki*, Long-Armed.

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sketches you might enjoy, on episodes in the different invasions of Russia."

It struck Faith that she ought really to be better read in Russian history. It was disgraceful to know as little as she did about a great empire, and a people of such genius in art, music and literature! She must take steps at once to inform herself. So she begged leave to cross over to an opposite bookstore while the baroness was at the dress-maker's.

Guiltily conscious of her secret purpose, Faith slipped timidly into the bookstore, where were books in many languages, chiefly romances, guide-books and books on sport, for the entertainment and instruction of tourists and summer-visitors. She applied to a discreet-looking clerk and, as an entering wedge, bought a volume of Púshkin's poems in German translation. Then she screwed up her courage and asked in a very small, low voice, if they had any works on Russian history, in translation, as she did not yet read Russian well.

"We don't keep historical works," declared the clerk, in what seemed to her an unnecessarily loud tone. "There is very little demand in a place like this for history."

"I do not mean large historical works," interposed Faith, very, very softly. "I mean sketches on historical subjects like — er — Knyáz Solntsoff's, for instance."

"I can order Knyáz Solntsoff's books for you, if you wish," said the clerk, and it seemed to Faith as if he shouted. She fancied every one in the shop was looking at her and must understand her reason for being interested in this author's works. Suddenly the clerk looked up animatedly.

"Here is the Illustrious Prince himself; he can tell me where to get them for you," he exclaimed, as the door opened and a tall figure in gray tweeds entered the shop.

The clerk darted forward and bowing low, addressed the

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newcomer deferentially. "Pardon me, Knyáz! but would your Illustrious Highness* obligingly advise me where I can procure the German translation of your 'Historical Episodes' for this young lady?"

Faith could have cried out for the earth to open and swallow her up! She could blush no more, poor child! and there was no escape to be had in flight. Driven to bay, she summoned desperate courage and faced the enemy boldly, lifting her head high as the prince approached and smiling cordially straight up into his face. He looked all polite astonishment at seeing her.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," he declared. "I am very glad I accidentally dropped in here if I can be of service to you, Miss Brandon, especially in a quest so flattering to me as a writer."

"I am very fond of historical novels," explained Faith, assuming a most straightforward and matter-of-fact manner, "especially Siénkiévicz's works on the struggles of the Poles and Lithuanians against the Tatars and the Swedes; and I find the whole period intensely interesting. Of course the Russians went through the same struggles, but I know very little of their share in these events, and Baroness Stourdza told me that you had written some sketches bearing on that period."

Her hearer listened courteously and with fitting gravity.

"If you would like to go back to some of the earliest works extant," he said with great seriousness, "I would advise you to begin with the recent French translation of 'The Word of Igor's Armament,' or the twelfth century 'Chronicles of Kief.' Then come the chronicles and epics bearing upon the Mongol and Tatar invasions in the South, and the struggles with Germans and Swedes in the North. These old chronicles are the foundation of all our historical novels."

**Vashe Siyádetstvo*, literally "Your Brilliancy" or "Your Splendor." The corresponding title in English would be that of a duke,—"Your Grace," but in Russia the latter is an inferior title.

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"If they are anything like the chronicles of Froissart, they are better than any novels ever written," cried Faith eagerly, unbending from her academic attitude in her enthusiasm. "Do please tell me where I can find them!"

"Hardly here," he replied, smiling down at the eager young face. "I will give you an address for the French translations I referred to, and I shall be delighted if you will permit me to lend you an English translation of our Epics and folk songs."

"Oh, thank you so much!" cried Faith. "It sounds as if they would be just what I most enjoy." She saw him glance slyly at her volume of Púshkin. Thankful that it was so creditable a book she picked it up and moved toward the door. The young man stopped to bow and wish a pleasant *do svidániya** to the clerk, then hastened forward to open the door for Faith and stepped after her into the street. Apparently he intended accompanying her to where the phaeton was waiting.

"Goodness gracious! He is coming with me!" she said to herself, in a blue fright. "Of course, he must think that my interest in Russian history is purely personal and all assumed on his account. Perhaps it would be best to let him suppose that I take him for a married man." She looked up into his face very candidly and ingenuously.

"You have such beautiful children," she remarked, pleasantly. "You must be very proud of them."

He flashed a quick glance of inquiry at her. Before replying he carefully twisted his moustache. "You mean my small niece and nephew?" he said at last. "Yes, indeed! Though only their bachelor uncle, I am almost as proud of them as their own father could be."

"Oh, you are their uncle!" she said, slowly, in well-feigned surprise. Then after a pause she added gravely, "I do not know that it is any great recommendation to be an uncle!"

* Pronounced *dah suid-ahn-ee-yah*, "au revoir!" "auf wiedersehen!"

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"What is wrong with uncles?" he asked good-humoredly, as they picked their way across the street to where the Tatar ponies waited in the shade.

"Uncles in stories are always wicked," she explained. "In all fairy tales they are as bad as stepmothers, if not worse. Look at 'Babes in the Woods' for instance. Then think of the uncles of history, King Richard III smothering the poor little princes in the Tower, or King John putting out Prince Arthur's eyes."

"Heavens!" he exclaimed, "What an awful lot we are, to be sure! How can I live down such a reputation?" He assisted her into the phaeton and drew the light duster about her knees, then, turning, raised his hat in acknowledgment of the driver's greeting and exchanged a few pleasant words with him in easy, democratic fashion. Then he lazily took up his position by the carriage step. It was evident that he intended to stay there till the baroness appeared.

"He could surely leave now, if he wished," thought Faith, nervously. "Is this his politeness, or does he really want to talk to me? I wonder why he doesn't return to the bookstore and do his errand there? Ought I to send him away?"

She decided to be deeply absorbed in her book, so that he need not feel obliged to amuse her if he wished for an excuse to leave.

"Are you — er — reading?" asked the prince, at last.

Faith closed her book in some confusion. How rude she must seem! "I beg your pardon," she stammered.

"Don't let me interrupt you!" he said apologetically, with a world of good-humored raillery in his tone and that merry, sidelong glance of the blue eyes that she remembered so well. "I know that Púshkin is very absorbing, even in German dress."

"I was afraid," explained Faith with concern, "that I

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might be keeping you from your errand at the bookstore. I did not mean to be rude."

"Thank you for your consideration," he said, pleasantly. "You are not keeping me from it. I have accomplished it."

Faith looked mystified. It must have been a very small errand, for he had not had time to say more than two words to the clerk!

At that moment the baroness appeared and after giving her hand cordially to the prince, who kissed it gallantly, she climbed into the phaeton.

"Are you returning to the hotel, Baroness?" he asked. "If so, will you give me the hospitality of your carriage?"

Faith wondered where he would sit, as she and the baroness fully occupied the one seat of the small carriage. But the floor was wide and roomy; and reaching up to the driver's seat the prince took down a cushion, placed it on the floor at their feet, and seated himself carelessly on it, half facing the ladies, his long legs dangling over the side, one foot braced against the steps. Faith recalled having occasionally seen other young men driving about in this informal fashion, but she had supposed them to be plebeian tourists, regardless of public opinion. It had not occurred to her that there is none so simple, so unassuming, so independent of conventionality as the true aristocrat; and that these easy-going youths were probably Serene or Illustrious Princes, or Excellent Counts, Court-Grandeess or Imperial Chamberlains.

The Kozák driver whipped up his active little Krim-Tatar ponies and drove homeward at a brisk pace, the illustrious descendant of Ryúrik chatting genially with the baroness on reminiscences of the old days at the Vienna Embassy.

When they reached the steep ascent to the hotel, he jumped off.

"Have you no pity on the ponies, Miss Brandon? Will

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you not walk up the hill with me?" he asked, holding out his hand to Faith.

"I will matronize you from the carriage," said the baroness, good-naturedly.

Faith started up happily. She felt quite at home with her hero already. To think that one short hour ago he was all unknown, and now he seemed like an old acquaintance!

"I am sure you are a good climber, Miss Brandon. The steepness of this path will not terrify you. It is so much shorter and more picturesque than the carriage road. We will fancy ourselves scaling the heights of Our Lady of Chénstohova with *Pan Andréi* in 'The Deluge.'" He did not wait for an answer but led the way up the rocky, hillside path. Faith was active and strong and sure-footed; but when he turned every now and then to offer a helping hand over the steepest spots, his firm, strong clasp and steady pull were a delightful aid. It was nearly impossible to talk during the rough climb; but when they arrived at the top, warm and out of breath, he suggested they should rest on the rustic bench placed there and wait for the slowly ascending carriage to join them.

"May I not dispense with ceremony and call you by your Christian name?" he asked. "It is our Russian custom among acquaintances in social life. Young and old, we call each other by our Christian name and patronymic as soon as we meet."

"But I — I have to call you 'Prince Solntsoff,' do I not?" she asked, timidly.

"Not according to our Russian customs," he replied. "We are very democratic. It seems to us more like the brotherhood of Christians. Perhaps we shall change when we are more civilized, and less Christian! But in Russia you will call me 'Lyéff Petróvich,' Leo, son of Peter. Besides," he added, "even in more formal countries I might surely be permitted to call you 'Faith,' as you are still a school-

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girl, and I am almost twice your age. You are just sixteen and I am entering my thirtieth year. Does that seem very old?"

"Oh, no, indeed! It is just the right age," she replied politely. "You see, in stories written for schoolgirls the hero is nearly always a man of about thirty years of age, so we think it is the finest age of all."

His lips twitched in an amused smile. Then he saw by the sudden wave of color that swept the child's face and a startled look in her eyes that she was beginning to see what she had implied in classing him with the heroes of young girls' romances. He hastened to turn her thoughts.

"Why do you like the Polish historical novels better than those of Scott and Cooper, based on your own ancestral history?" he asked.

Faith took a moment to find words. "I think it is because the Polish stories have the interest of a spiritual struggle as well as of the usual temporal difficulties and physical exploits. Siénkiéwicz's heroes have many and great faults, but they have so much heart, so much loyalty, such deep faith! It is really beautiful! That is why 'The Deluge' is my favorite. In it you can see the soul of *Pan Andrzej* struggling from the bad toward the good. All through his exciting adventures you can feel the undercurrent of his spiritual purification through penance and trials."

"Like all women, you fancy sinners!" said the prince a little bitterly. "You do not believe that the so-called 'good' also have their struggles, their failures and triumphs?"

"Oh, yes, I do!" cried Faith, eagerly. "It is only when their consciences are aroused and they begin painfully to turn toward the good, that sinners become interesting."

"You find the reclaimed sinner interesting," he persisted jealously, "while the good, who have struggled up the hard road from the start, bearing the heat and burden of the day, you find dull."

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Faith's voice was low and a little tremulous as she replied, "We do not find them dull. They are the real heroes. We worship the ground they tread on!"

He looked steadily and thoughtfully out before him. "No human being, man or woman, is worthy of such worship," he said, gravely. "Confine your hero-worship to the saints of God, the true heroes and heroines of humanity. As for your ordinary, everyday, God-fearing fellow-christians, neither saints nor sinners, many of us are worthy of your sincere liking, your trust, your love, even. But do not prepare misery for yourself by making impossible idols of us. According to Scripture, even the good fall seven times a day and rise again,—almost enough to make them 'interesting!' There! I have read you a long, dull lecture,—Experience of thirty years addressing Faith of sixteen!" and he smiled brightly at her. "Yours is such a beautiful name in our Russian tongue," he added gently. "We call it 'Vyéra.'"*

"Vyéra?" she repeated, "I supposed that it was Vera, the Latin for 'true.'"

"No, it is the theological virtue of Faith, from 'vyérit,' to believe. Vyéra, Faith; Nadézhda,† Hope, and Lyubóv,‡ Love, are all favorite names with us, though to me Vyéra is the most beautiful, for how can we either hope or love, unless we first have faith?" and he looked very earnestly into the sweet, noble young face beside him.

Suddenly an amusing thought seemed to strike him. "You, for instance, have very little faith in uncles! I am sure you would not have recognized me so kindly this morning if you had known I was an uncle."

Faith did not answer. A terrible feeling had come over her. Could it be that he had seen through her duplicity in professing to think him a married man? Had he pene-

* Pronounced, V'yáir-ah.

† Nahd-yáizh-dah.

‡ L'you-bóv.

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trated that harmless little artifice? And must she cover it up with another artifice, or would he see through that as easily? Yet, how in the world could she ever own up that she had tried to mislead him?

"Would you?" he persisted teasingly. He looked kindly enough at her; but it seemed to Faith as if his eyes, the true Slavic eyes of soft, light blue, had suddenly grown dark and piercing and could penetrate to the very marrow of her bones. "Would you have been so friendly, if you had known from the first that I was only an uncle, and not a respectable father of a family?"

She turned her face away and hung her head. Her lips quivered and two round pearly tears trembled on her dark lashes. "My sin has found me out," she sighed. "The good Lord must love me, for He certainly chastens me! I never yet told the least little bit of a white lie that I was not immediately found out and shamed for it."

The prince listened with a grave face and looked at her very intently. He almost held his breath as he waited for her next words.

If she was to do the thing at all, she would do it thoroughly. So she swung round and faced him, looking straight into his eyes. "I might as well make a clean breast of it," she said. "I did know it, all the time! I knew from the very first that you were the children's uncle! I only said what I did because I was — er — embarrassed."

He drew a long breath, but he made no reply.

"He would be more generous," she thought, "if he knew what it cost me to confess." And she turned away feeling utterly condemned.

The prince saw the shamed, tearful eyes and resolute mouth. He said to himself, "Her soul is too pure and true to be happy under the slightest stain. She has the moral courage to confess her faults and to face what may come."

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But the words that he pronounced aloud were altogether different.

"So you knew all the time," he repeated, quietly. "And I knew all the time that you knew!"

"I suppose so," she sighed, resigned to the worst.

"Poor child! You are punished enough for a very small offence, one which only amused me at the time, but which has had consequences that I am most grateful for," and his glance, had she seen it, was full of kindly admiration.

"You have kept faith with me and I thank you from my soul," he continued, "for I know what it has cost your brave little heart to confess. But, Vyéra, I, too, have a confession to make! It may perhaps console you somewhat to know that I share your guilt!"

She turned and glanced upward inquiringly. He was half-laughing, half-frowning, and looking actually a little confused.

"I was very much surprised, was I not, to find you in the bookstore, and told you that it was an 'unexpected pleasure' — that I was glad I had 'accidentally dropped in'?"

She nodded.

"Well, Vyéra, the strict truth is this. When I took the children home I had intended to devote the rest of the morning to some important writing, instead of which I turned round and walked back into the town, wandering about till I caught sight of Baroness Stourdza's carriage and saw you cross the street and enter the bookstore. Then I — deliberately and intentionally — followed in after you, and told you that pack of lies!"

Every last cloud had vanished from Faith's expressive countenance. Her eyes were shining like two stars, and the corners of her mouth were twitching with suppressed mirth. She watched him breathlessly. "Why?" she asked.

"Because I, too, was '— er — embarrassed,'" he replied.

Faith shook her head and looked unconvinced. "But,

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why?" she asked again, for it was inconceivable that so experienced a man of the world should be embarrassed before a mere child.

His eyes glanced downward and sideways at her from under the shadow of their long lashes.

"I am a sober, sedate, sensible man, as a rule," he explained. "I am not in the habit of running about the streets in pursuit of young ladies, much less of little schoolgirls in short frocks and pigtails. But I was nearly knocked over the other evening by an apparition in the moonlight. I have wished to verify its corporeal existence, but hitherto it has eluded me. I have approached it and it has fled from me, till I began to think myself the victim of some moonstruck fantasy. When I finally cornered it, I suddenly became conscious of the anomaly of my position. Fancy how startled you would have been had I exclaimed, 'I have caught you at last!' No wonder I had recourse to subterfuge! Vyéra, do you condemn me for that sin?"

Faith grinned. "I am afraid I take a most unholy joy in it," she said, and they both burst out laughing.

"Now we are quits!" he said gayly, "and you must admit that you like me better since you find I am a sinner, and an unrepenting one at that!"

"I certainly feel more at home with you now that I know we are two of a kind," she acknowledged.

"And our friendship is now on a firm basis of mutual understanding and confidence."

"Friendship!" echoed Faith. "There can be no such thing as friendship between you and me."

"And why not, if you please?"

"Why, because there must be some equality in friendship, some exchange of equal value. Now, what can an ignorant, unformed schoolgirl like me have to give to an experienced, clever man of the world like you?"

"Please do not call me a 'man of the world,'" he said,

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"for the world and I, meaning the world of pomps and vanities — the 'great world,' are not on good terms. We have a poor opinion of one another. As for your youth, I can only assure you that there are women twice your age and many times your experience with whom I have no interests, no tastes in common, on which to found friendship. But you and I are congenial in our tastes, and it appears that we are even akin in our failings. Is there¹ not a basis for friendship?"

"At least, you can be a friend to me," she replied, earnestly. "You can give me so much of value from your experience and greater knowledge. I can give you only my sympathy and my companionship, such as it is. You can be my big friend, but I can be only your little comrade."

"My 'little comrade,'" he repeated. "I like that name, 'Little Comrade.' Believe me, Vyéra, you give me much of value when you give me your sympathy and your companionship."

The carriage was rapidly nearing them. He held out his hand. "From henceforth we are 'Big Friend' and 'Little Comrade,' and as such pledge our faith."

With one of her radiant smiles she laid her hand in his. He bent over it and pressed his lips to her fingers. "This is another of our Russian usages which you must become accustomed to," remarked the prince.

CHAPTER III

THE "FAIR-SUN"

"How attractive to us are the banks of the Dn'yéper, the Volkhóf, the Don, when we know what has taken place upon them in remote antiquity! The shadows of bygone centuries everywhere draw pictures before us."

—*N. Karamzine.*

"IN THIS wise came the Kozák youth, Ilyá, to Kíef; and he did reverence as prescribed, and in particular to the Fair-Sun, Prince Vladímir.* And the courteous Vladímir sent to bid the strange hero to the feast, and inquired of him from what horde and land he came.

"Thou Fair-Sun, Prince Vladímir," replied Ilyá, 'I came hither by the straight way, beside famed Smoródina amid the bending birches!'"

"That is my uncle," announced Alyósha† Chernyatin, breaking in upon his sister's reading. "That is he, 'the good Prince,' the 'Courteous Prince, Fair-Sun,' '*Krásnoye Solntse*,'" and he clapped his small hands joyously.

"Our uncle is descended from Vladímir '*Solntse*,' that is the derivation of the family name '*Solntsoff*!'"‡ explained Yirína, the oldest girl.

And Faith, who held the little boy on her knee, surreptitiously kissed the back of his curly brown head, for he had pronounced aloud the very thought of her heart.

"Continuez, Mademoiselle Irène," said the governess.

So Yirína Pávlovna continued the reading of the famous Russian epic; and the children listened in wide-eyed wonder

* "Lord of the World," pronounced Vlad-yeé-mir.

† Diminutive of Alekséy, i. e., Alexis.

‡ Written *Solntsev*; pronounced Sawn-tzōff.

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to the marvelous adventures of *Ilyá of Múrom*, surpassing the wildest fancies of the "Arabian Nights." "So swift was the flight of his good steed, Cloudfall, that there seemed but a smoke-wreath on the plain, as when wild winds of winter whirl about the snow. And the good Cloudfall skimmed over the hills and above the waters and soared, like a bright falcon, over the tall, dreaming forest. High over the standing pines he soared, the primeval oaks, yet lower than the drifting clouds. From mountain to mountain he sprang, from hilltop to hilltop he galloped, little rivers and lakes dropped from between his feet; where his hoofs fell founts of water gushed forth; in the open plain smoke eddied and arose aloft in a pillar. At each leap Cloudfall compassed a verst and a half."

Small wonder that with the aid of such a steed the young Kozák destroyed, single-handed, the entire Tatar host. "The gray hare could not course, nor the swiftest falcon fly about that host, so vast was it; and the cloud of steam from the horses was so great that the fair red sun was not seen by day nor the silver moon by night. And Ilyá flew over the lofty gates of Chernígoff and entered the church, where all the people were assembled, praying God, repenting, and receiving the holy sacrament against sure and approaching death at the hands of the besieging Tatar host." And "Ilyá crossed himself as prescribed, and did reverence as enjoined, and cried 'Hail, mighty heroes, all! Why do ye thus bid farewell to the white world? Go ye upon the famous walls of your city and look toward the open plain!' And they did as he commanded, and lo! where had stood the many, very many, foreign standards like a dark, dry forest, now were the accursed Tatars mown down and heaped up like a field of grain which hath been reaped!"*

Jack, the Giant-killer, and *Guy of Warwick*, with whose exploits Faith had tried to entertain the children, paled

* Translation taken by permission from Isabel F. Hapgood's "Epic Songs of Russia."

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before *Ilyá Múromets*. What was the *Giant Cormoran* compared to *Nightingale, the Robber*, who built his nest on seven oaks; and when he whistled like a nightingale, the dark forest bowed to the earth, the green leaves withered, and horse and rider fell as dead? And when he hissed like a dragon, sparks and flame poured from his mouth and nostrils. And when he roared like an aurochs, all the ancient palaces of Kíef fell in ruins, the new castles rocked, and the roofs of the city fell to the ground; damp Mother Earth quivered, and as many as remained to listen, died!

And many more such wonderful tales and chronicles had Faith made acquaintance with in these happy days. She learned to know *Yúri Dolgorúki*,* *Vsévolod Bolshóe Gnyezdo*,† *Mystislav Sokol*‡ the Young *Vasilko* and many another hero; but above all she loved the history of *Andréi Yúrievich*,§ surnamed *Bogolyubóv*, Love of God. *Andréi*, "Beloved father, nourisher of orphans, kind and gentle, simple and strong, putting his arms around the poor, loving those who are abandoned, giving them to eat and to drink." Many and hot were the tears she shed over his cruel, treacherous murder; and she loved to read of the faithful *Kozmá*, who found his hidden body and bore it to the door of the golden-domed church of the Miraculous Virgin, and watched over it for two days and two nights, while the people wailed, "O friend, art thou gone from us?" and no man could restrain his tears. And he remains in the minds of the Russian people as a bright and pure memory, for he sprinkled the house in which he lived with his martyr's blood; and in the moments of his bitterest agony, betrayed and hacked to death at the hands of those he had trusted and loved, he parted from the world with the words, "O God, receive Thou my spirit!"

And near the palace of *Andréi Bogolyubóv* there stands a dark and swampy lake, and a weird spot called "Floating Island"; and on that island, when the wind blows, are seen

* Long Arm. † Big Nest. ‡ Falcon. § Andrew, son of George.

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dark patches moving restlessly hither and thither; and from the dark depths of the lake come sighs and groans, for into its foul waters were cast the bodies of *Andr  i's* murderers. And the people cross themselves and cry, "Pray thou for us, O friend of the poor, that the Lord may assist us against our enemies!"*

It did not occur to Faith as a matter of surprise that Kny  z Solntsoff should have supplied himself, for a temporary sojourn at a fashionable watering place, with so extensive a collection of translations of Russian folklore and history. He had also presented her with a German edition in two volumes of his own "Episodes from the Great Invasions." These she pored over in the solitude of her room, sleeping with them under her pillow at night, for were they not his gift to her and had he not himself inscribed her name in them—"Zur freundlichen Erinnerung an Leo, F  rst Soln  zow?" She did not know the secrets of his mail, or how many orders went to French and German booksellers, or how many packages were received from them by return post. She only knew that new and delightful books were at the young people's disposal every day of this happy, this ecstatic month of September on the shores of the romantic bay of Yalta.

In a small summer house, overhanging the mountain path above the hotel, was the wheel chair of the invalid Kny  z Kli  zemski, the former ambassador. About sixty-five years of age, rheumatic and somewhat palsied, he was still a man of great mental vigor, with a keen interest in life, fond of conversation and taking pleasure in having his friends and family about him. At the present moment he and Graf   Aly  nkin were busily engaged in reading the latest journals from St. Petersburg and discussing the news, political and social. The ladies, Countess Aly  nkina,

* Adapted from J. Curtin's translation.

Graf, i.e. Count *Graf  nia*, Countess.

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Baroness Stourdza, and Countess Chernyatina, sat nearby, occupied with water-colors and embroidery, but also listening to and often taking a lively share in the discussions. At a little distance, two roly-poly, yellow-haired toddlers solemnly played ball with a prim, English nurse. Below, on the rustic bench bordering the mountain path, sat Faith with the older Alyónkin children, the young Chernyatins and their French governess.

Two younger men graced the scene with their presence. Baron Stourdza, dark, melancholy-eyed, and strikingly handsome except for his somewhat small stature, sprawled at length at the foot of a huge laurel tree, smoking a cigarette and reading a French novel. Under a neighboring cedar, in a sitting posture, with his back against the tree, the big, sunny-haired Russian was busily engaged with writing.

Perhaps it would be more strictly in accordance with the truth to say that he was apparently busy. By habit he was a rapid worker, his mind singularly concentrated and alert; but he required solitude and silence for his best efforts. It seemed strange then, that he should have taken up his position at the foot of a tree not two rods from where the young people sat. Surely their loud talk and eager chatter must break in annoyingly on his train of thought! That they gave him serious distraction was evident, for he frequently laid down his pencil altogether and gazed at the little group with a dreamy look in his blue eyes, and a smile, half-amused, half-tender, playing under the shadow of his moustache. No doubt he was too familiar with the Russian tales to pay much attention to their reading by Irène. The English legends and ballads were probably of fresher interest, for it was noticeable that his distractions occurred chiefly during Faith's recitations to the older children of "The White Doe of Rylstone," "The Lady of Shallott," "Sir Patrick Spens," "Chevy Chase," or "Morte d'Arthur," and even more markedly when she held

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Alyósha on her knee and gathered the toddlers about her, and sang to them in her sweet, untrained voice of the "Babes in the Woods," of "Lord Lovel and Lady Nancibel," of "Cock Robin and Jenny Wren," or the more cheerful ditties of the Frog who would a-wooing go, and the Pig who wouldn't cross the stile.

Baron Stourdza yawned and tossed aside his book. "Fidès! Fidès!* Come here!" he called in French, imperiously, to Faith.

Faith did not budge.

"Fidès!" — gently, "Fidès!" — more gently, "Fidès!" — most gently, entreatingly, meltingly!

"What is it, Baron?" she asked, sweetly, turning toward him. He made an imperative gesture with hand and head. "Come here! I have something to say to you."

Faith did not budge.

"Don't you hear me? Aren't you coming?" crossly.

"I think not," answered Faith slowly and with infinite dignity.

The baron sat bolt upright and frowned angrily. "Don't put on those independent American airs," he growled, "as if you expected everything in the shape of a man to be your slave, and to dance attendance on your every whim. You are much mistaken if you think you can make me move. Besides, it is altogether out of place for you, a mere infant in short dresses, to refuse to come to me a respectable, middle-aged, married man."

"Oh, not middle-aged, Baron!" expostulated Faith, softly.

The baron looked mollified, but he gathered himself together and continued firmly, "You are sixteen and I am thirty-eight, old enough to be your father. I am your host and your guardian, temporarily. You owe me a certain deference."

* Pronounced Fee-dez. This Latin form of the name *Faith*, is used by the French and the Germans.

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Faith hesitated. "I believe you are right," she said, thoughtfully. "Excuse me, Baron, I will come," and she started to rise.

"Stop!" cried the baron, springing to his feet. "Don't move!" He stared at her, his dark, melancholy eyes all alight with admiration. Then he took off his hat and made her a deep, reverential salute. "I take off my hat to you," he said. "You are that most sweet and rare thing upon God's earth, a woman that is reasonable."

"But you give such good reasons!" explained Faith, and again she started to rise.

"Don't get up, don't move!" cried the baron, impetuously. "I am coming to you!"

His wife, from the little summer house overhanging the path, looked on with stupefaction. "Well! Well! My Kirill, the most obstinate and the most indolent of men — and the dearest, too, for that matter! Humph, I must take a leaf out of Faith's book! In her place I would never have admitted that he was right. I should have argued for half an hour, then he would have turned his back coldly and marched off, and we should hardly have spoken to each other for three days. But she smilingly admits his superior wisdom and, lo, he is at her feet! Well, we live to learn, but, heigh-ho! I am no longer sweet sixteen, — I'm afraid I could not make it work." And she sighed again, as she thought regretfully of her thirty-four years and her stout, solid frame. "There was a time when he used to jump for me, too," she reflected with a third sigh, but added honestly, "To be sure, I did not argue with him in those days!"

"Put up your books! Too much reading is bad for us young people. We must have a romp and get up our appetites for luncheon," commanded the baron, and he soon had the older children organized in a merry game of "La Chasse." Each was named for something in the

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hunt, the horses, the hounds, the horn, the guns, the saddles, the whips and so forth; and he rattled off a lively description of the gathering of the meet till all the names had been mentioned, and each, as called, had taken his or her place in the ranks. Then off started the leader, running, climbing, jumping, hallooing, in and out among the trees, up the hill and down again, hither and thither and everywhere, until the huntsman gave the signal for the race, when every boy seized a girl's hand, and in couples they ran pell-mell for the rendezvous at the summer house. While the ranks were first forming, portly, middle-aged Graf Alyónkin had dropped his newspaper and slidden in among his young people. Then Solntsoff grinned, stood up, stretched his long, shapely limbs, laid a heavy stone on his papers that they should not be scattered by the summer breeze, and stepped lightly over to the merry group. The eldest Alyónkin boy, overweighted by the dignity of his fifteen years and his first long trousers, hesitated for a while, turning up his nose at the antics of his elders, but ended by sneaking into the ranks just behind Yirína Pávlovna. When the signal came to disband, the hunters were fully a quarter of a mile from the rendezvous. The prince seized Faith's hand and together they ran laughing and scrambling down the hillside. He dragged her through bushes, lifted her over rocks, jumped her down a bank. Their hats fell off, her hair came unbraided and blew all about her in tangled confusion; but on they fled, breathless and joyous.

"What has befallen Lyóva!"* gasped Countess Chernyatina, as she glanced toward her uncle. "He, who is so impatient of the slightest interruption to his work, who scorns the society of young girls, who has ever been sober, sedate, unsociable as far as the pastimes of youth are concerned! Can I believe my eyes? How are the mighty fallen!"

* Diminutive of Lev.

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The old prince laughed good-humoredly. "Every dog has his day," he chuckled. "Lyóva was slow in coming to it, but his day was bound to arrive, sooner or later."

"Yes, but ——" began the sister. Then she checked herself. She could not well say what was on her mind before Faith's hostess.

The first to arrive at the rendezvous was Yirína with Sásha* Alyónkin. The other couples came tumbling after in more or less excitement and disorder; and, last of all, Solntsoff with Faith, who was limping slightly, but was cheerfully and gayly making light of her misfortune.

She had merely slipped on some loose pebbles and turned her ankle a little, enough to hurt for the moment but not to be of any lasting consequence. But how concerned and kind the prince had been! He had looked quite pale with anxiety at first. He had knelt and taken off her shoe to make sure that there was no sprain or dislocation, and had bandaged the ankle tightly with his handkerchief in a way that seemed to Faith a marvel of skill. When she tried to walk, how solicitous and tender he was, how anxious to support and help her! Why, he would have lifted her up and carried her home in his arms, if she would have let him! That he was strong enough to do so she knew, for she had seen him carry his uncle up and down a long flight of stairs, and the uncle was no small man.

Faith, who had never been accustomed to being waited on in all her healthy young life but who, on the contrary, had always been the one to wait on others, found it very strange and rather funny to be the object of such tender solicitude. She actually giggled outright, in spite of the pain, when he was binding her ankle, and especially when he suggested carrying her. It was so exactly like a heroine in a novel that it seemed as if she must be dreaming. Heroines always sprained their ankles and were carried incredible

* Diminutive of Aleksandr.

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distances in the hero's arms. By good luck, the prince did not understand why she was giggling, but thought her a little hysterical from the fall and made her take something from a small flask, which he carried in case his uncle should be ill or over-fatigued. Faith swallowed it obediently, though nearly choking over it in her wild desire to laugh.

But if it was funny to be the object of so much attention and kindness, it was also very, very pleasant! She certainly liked it!

As the whole party wandered back to the hotel, Stourdza insisted on her taking his arm, and the prince left her to help his uncle's valet lift the wheel-chair over some steep places in the path. It lacked still half-an-hour of luncheon time when they arrived at their rooms.

"Faith, you must have a warm bath and lie on the lounge in my room and have your luncheon brought up," commanded the baroness. "Now, do not rebel! A fall like that is always more or less of a strain."

"Solntsoff is going back for his hat, and incidentally for yours, Fidès, and I am going with him," announced the baron.

"Oh, my hair ribbon! Please look for that, too!" begged Faith. "It is the only one I have of that color."

"Hats and ribbons, 'blankets and pins'," muttered the baron. "'When a man's married,' — or in love — 'his trouble begins.'" He said it, however, in the German equivalent for the famous couplet, as he was not familiar with English, and he sauntered off obediently with his companion.

The two figures were hardly out of sight when the baroness sat down with a groan. "That man has my keys!" she cried.

"What man?" asked Faith.

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"That man that has just left, Kiríll, my husband. Isn't that exactly like him? The most vexatious, trying creature! He insisted on locking up everything, boxes, wardrobes, chest of drawers, before we went to spend the morning in the woods, and pocketed the keys. Now that you want to take a bath and get into a comfortable negligée, and I want to put on a cool, fresh dress for luncheon, here we have to sit in our hot, dusty things, waiting until he chooses to return!" and the warm, irritated woman sprang up and walked angrily and restlessly about the room. "So fussy one minute and so careless the next, he is enough to wear out the patience of a saint!" she complained.

Faith felt very uncomfortable. The baron and baroness were each so good-natured and nice to everybody else, but spent too much of the time nagging and bickering with each other; not in any rough, loud way, for the baron was a courteous man, even to his wife, and she was really well-bred in spite of a somewhat blunt, off-hand manner. But she was undoubtedly impatient and fault-finding, and he returned it with quiet sarcasm or cold withdrawal. Yet Faith could have sworn they were really fond of each other.

"I shall give him a piece of my mind when he comes back. He ought to be made to feel what inconvenience and annoyance his carelessness has put us to. But he will just assume that lofty look of his and lay all the blame on me. What would you do with such a trying man, Faith?"

"What should I do?" echoed Faith, startled. What would she do, indeed, if she had a husband, one who meant well but was forgetful? Somehow, in the vision that rose before her, he did not seem to be a short, dark man like the baron, but was vaguely big, and pleasant and fair. She did not feel that he deserved to be scolded. She could only remember that he had meant to be kind and careful, and that she herself was often forgetful.

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"I think," she said, looking up laughingly, "that when I saw him coming, I should run to meet him and throw my arms round his neck and say, 'I was never more glad to see you!' And, you know, the longer he had kept me waiting, the truer it would be!"

"Nonsense!" sniffed the baroness contemptuously, flouncing out of the room.

Faith sat by the window and watched for the men to return. Luncheon had long been announced before she at last saw them come sauntering toward the hotel, chatting genially, wholly unconscious of any cause for haste.

"Oh, they are coming now, Baroness! The baron has my hat perched on his stick and is waving it at me, and Knyáz Solntsoff has his arms full of ferns and wild flowers. Why, he must mean them for you, for he has given them all to the baron and is going over to his *dacha*."

She heard Stourdza coming toward the sitting-room. Then the baroness suddenly returned from her bedroom and opened the door to the returning prodigal.

"Please take off my hat for me," he said, "both my hands are full."

She took off his hat, then she burst out laughing and threw her arms about his neck. "You dear, incorrigible Kirill!" she exclaimed. "I never was more glad to see you in all my life!" and she kissed him heartily on both cheeks.

The baron looked keenly from one to the other of the laughing women. "Humph! I don't understand it. I am a plain man and your wiles are too much for me. Here, Fidès, relieve me of this vegetable matter! For a man who loathes mud and insects and rocks and briars as much as I do, you must confess that I have endured a great deal for your sake the last hour, trudging through swamps and thickets with that big Muscovy bear. Nothing would do but he must get you wonderful specimens of ferns that only

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grow in impenetrable morasses, and wild flowers that could only be found halfway up precipices. I hope you are grateful."

"For me!" exclaimed Faith. "Do you mean that he got them for me?"

"Take them quick! There! And your hat! And here is a letter for you! Never mind thanks. Why aren't you ready for luncheon? It is long past the hour and I am starved." Again both women laughed and again he scrutinized one and the other. Then he gave a sudden start, turned red, thrust his hand into his pocket and drew forth a bunch of keys. He stood there, looking the picture of guilt and misery. Beating his breast with a tragic gesture, he fell on his knees and laid the keys at his wife's feet.

"Do what you please to me," he sighed. "No fate is too bad for me."

But she only laughed again and patted him on the shoulder.

"Get up, silly fellow!" she said, "and for your penance you can unlock all the boxes for me." He kissed her hand and, springing up, went gayly about his task, while his wife winked at Faith behind his back.

"And my ribbon! Did you see that anywhere?" inquired Faith, anxiously.

"Your ribbon? Oh, your ribbon! Er — was it a blue ribbon?"

"Yes, a lovely shade that is very hard to find."

"Well, it will be harder to find than ever, now," said the baron, mysteriously.

"Why, what do you mean? Where is it?"

"Wild horses shall not drag that information from me. Never will I betray the secrets of a friend."

"Please don't tease me! Do you know where it is, or do you not?"

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"Do I know where it is? Shall I perjure myself, or shall I betray a friend?" and with a gesture of despair the baron threw out his hands imploringly. "In either case I shall be damned! Fidès, I cannot perjure myself, for then I should suffer everlastingly, but if I betray a friend he only suffers temporarily. I will be heroic, — I will sacrifice my friend! Yes, I know where your ribbon is. It is — in — Solntsoff's — left-hand — vest — pocket — right — over — here," and he tapped his coat significantly on the spot under which one's heart is supposed to lie. "And," he added, "if you wish to get it back, you will have to pay a big, big price for it."

Faith giggled, turned red and, grasping her flowers, buried her blushing face in the cool ferns and wild orchids.

"Now I can keep his handkerchief," she thought, delightedly.

The baroness pinched the girl's crimson cheeks. "He is very fond of you, lucky, lucky little girl that you are to have so splendid a man for your friend!"

But Faith fled to her own room. There she sank into a chair and clasping her hands, prayed with all her young heart that she might be good enough and fortunate enough to have him for a friend all her life!

Then, with cheeks still burning, with glistening eyes and smiling lips, she took up and opened the letter which the baron had brought her. It was from her stepsister, Genevieve.

"DEAR FAITH:

"Judging from letters I had recently from Yalta, you are constantly with a Russian so-called 'prince' whom you know nothing about, and who is evidently amusing himself at your expense. I cannot warn you enough to be extremely careful and never, never, under any circumstances, go anywhere alone with him. You have not read as many Russian novels as I have or you would know that he is the type of man that their novelists delight in picturing, the type of

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Eugene Onégin, *Dimitri Rudin* and *Pechórin*, who have wasted their youth in dissipation and, as they grow older, like to philander around with young, unsophisticated girls. They do not mean them any actual harm; but it interests them to teach the young things their first lessons in love-making, and they enjoy the flattery and incense of their hero-worship. They do not dream of marrying them. They simply indulge in the amusement of breaking an innocent heart to pass away the time between their more serious love affairs.

"Now a foreign man, a gay bachelor of Prince Solntsoff's age is sure to have had a good many affairs of the heart and to be pretty well experienced in idle love-making. A man of his rank, precarious position and limited means is not going to marry an American girl unless she is an heiress; and you may be very sure that he has informed himself pretty accurately of your family affairs and knows that you are no heiress, that you are not, in fact, entitled to a single penny of your own.

"You are at a romantic, imaginative age, and you are attracted by the glamor of his title. But in Russia, 'princes' are thick as blackberries; and as for the man himself, you must look beyond the mere superficial veneer of charming manners and agreeable conversation, the stock-in-trade of all these twopenny aristocrats, and only consider that he is an impecunious, unprincipled man who thinks that he can indulge himself with impunity in an idle summer flirtation with a bright, amusing young girl, because she is so extremely young that nobody will attribute serious intentions to him. You must show character, and protect yourself. Restrain your too evident fondness for this man, which is making you the talk of the town, and break with him at once, without waiting for us to come and take you away. He will respect you more for it than for your foolish eagerness to be with him and his party all the time. You will never see him again after he leaves Yalta, and some day you will thank us for nipping this unfortunate, schoolgirl affair in the bud.

"Your affectionate sister,
"GENEVIEVE BRANDON."

CHAPTER IV

THE LUDLOWS AND BRANDONS

"The tender grace of a day that is dead."—*Tennyson*.

ON THE slope of Beacon Hill in Boston, in the one-time centre of its aristocratic and literary life, there stood a modest house, with bay-windowed front and terraced lawn, where dwelt an elderly widow and two middle-aged, spinster daughters. Within, though it gave evidence of restricted means, the modest house also gave unmistakable proof of highly cultivated, cosmopolitan tastes of an age that is past. The well-worn carpets, furniture, and ornaments were of French design of the Second Empire, and had been choice and elegant in their day. On the walls hung portraits of distinguished-looking men and richly gowned women in mid-Victorian dress, together with well-painted copies of the old masters. Miniatures and framed photographs of royal families and European statesmen of a former generation stood on mantel-pieces and tables. Books representing classic literature in the principal modern languages were everywhere in abundance. Rare editions, choice engravings, exquisite pieces of porcelain and bronze met the eye. A heavily gilded Erard harp stood in one corner of the drawing room and, near it, a now somewhat decrepit grand-piano of the same make. The tapestries that hung from the walls, the rugs on the floor were all of value and artistic worth. The treasures seemed to rest uneasily in their crowded quarters in the narrow rooms of the modest house.

The three ladies looked equally out of place. Their tall, stately forms, their aristocratic bearing, their courtly man-

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ners, the distinction of their utterance as they conversed together in exquisite French, German, or Italian, seemed to require the setting of some spacious, old-world palace. Little wonder if they also felt themselves out of keeping with their narrow surroundings.

Descended from an old Puritan family of Massachusetts Bay Colony, their father, Edgar Ludlow, a graduate of Harvard and a student of history and law at the universities of Heidelberg and Cambridge, had early received a diplomatic appointment from the government of Washington to one of the small German courts. From thence he had risen to be minister plenipotentiary at more important capitals, and for thirty years had lived at one European court or another without returning to his native land. Preëminently a scholar, his works on history and constitutional government had taken their place as authorities among English-speaking students. His young family had grown up on the continent in the atmosphere of court and diplomatic life, and had been carefully bred according to the best European models. They had shared the studies and the pastimes of royalty and nobility. His son had been trained at Oxford and had taken orders in the church of England; his eldest daughter was married to an English diplomat of noble connections; his youngest daughter was betrothed to a German noble of high rank, when, without warning, the minister plenipotentiary shuffled off this mortal coil and the dignities attached to it. Then it was found that he had left his family unprovided for.

It was true that Minister Ludlow had carried a life insurance of fifty thousand dollars in favor of his widow and daughters, but he had borrowed more than that sum to meet the expenses of the last two or three years. In vain the family lawyers assured the ladies that they were not legally responsible for the debts of the husband and father. They seemed unable to follow the reasoning of the men of

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law. Without complaint or question they applied the life insurance to the payment of the minister's indebtedness, the betrothed daughter breaking off her engagement that the money provided for her dowry might be directed to this purpose. Then they packed up the most treasured of the books and works of art carefully gathered by the late minister, sold their jewelry and other valuable personal belongings, and found their way back to the land of their birth, the land of which the younger ladies had no memory.

The widow Ludlow had inherited from her parents the modest house on Mt. Vernon Street and an income of eight hundred dollars a year. Her memory of the Beacon Hill of her youth was that of the centre of a literary Boston where men of letters, philosophers, men of the learned and scientific professions, women of thought and culture and wit, met in delightful simplicity of social intercourse. In this society the Ludlows and Brandons of forty and fifty years before had shone conspicuous. In this society she fancied that she and her daughters would find a congenial atmosphere where their birth and antecedents, their talents and accomplishments would be everything, their present enforced simplicity of living no barrier to social eminence.

A cruel disillusion awaited her. During her thirty years' absence a new generation had grown up to whom the name of Ludlow had little or no significance. Former friends had died or had moved to the suburbs, or to the newer, more fashionable quarters of the city. The old figures of literary Boston had one by one disappeared. A few survivors who maintained the old traditions called upon the returned wanderers and found them out of touch with present-day life and ideas. The newer Boston had no place for these old-world figures.

With the exquisite sensibility of high breeding, the ladies soon discerned this and grew more and more reserved, more patiently resigned to a colorless, dull life, devoid of the social,

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intellectual and political interests and the masculine companionships that had surrounded them during their father's diplomatic career. The old order had changed, and into the new they had neither the means nor the desire to find their way.

But one thing pressed upon them, the difficulty of making eight hundred dollars support three ladies unaccustomed to domestic work and in more or less frail health. There was but this sum with which to pay taxes and repairs upon the house, servants' wages, doctors' bills, food, clothing, heat and light, and many other things desirable or undesirable. To stretch this sum the ladies must turn their accomplishments to account.

So Miss Louisa Ludlow, a pupil of Marmontel in Paris, advised her Boston acquaintance that she was prepared to give lessons in advanced pianoforte playing. But at that time the French school was only beginning to get a hearing, and expensive finishing lessons were sought only from professional masters. Reduced gentlewomen were supposed to confine themselves to teaching beginners at starvation rates. No pupils came to Miss Louisa.

To Miss Adèle the world was kinder. It was said that she had a broken heart, as well as an extensive knowledge of modern languages and standard literature. A broken heart, especially when said to have been broken by one of princely rank, united to fine eyes, an aquiline nose and a distinguished accent of the Faubourg St. Germain, made an interesting combination. It became almost a fad among a small, exclusive, and highly cultured set of the Back Bay to patronize the classes in French drama and Italian poetry which were held two afternoons a week in the parlors of the Mt. Vernon Street house by Miss Adèle Ludlow.

A few years after their return their income was further enlarged from another source, the board of Faith Brandon.

It has been said that the eldest Miss Ludlow had married,

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when very young, a rising English diplomat of noble connections. The Honorable Robert Milbanke, brother of the clever but crippled Viscount Solway, died in the course of time leaving an only son as heir-presumptive to the title. It had been a hard struggle for the widowed Mrs. Milbanke to educate her boy as he should be educated for his position, but she proudly refused all help till his sixteenth year, when the noble invalid begged to be allowed to adopt his heir as a son. Feeling that the boy had reached an age when he needed masculine guidance, the mother sorrowfully acquiesced in her brother-in-law's idea of adoption. Returning to America to visit her mother and sisters, she accepted, at thirty-six years of age, an offer of marriage from a distant cousin on her mother's side of the family, Charles Brandon, distinguished as scientist and astronomer.

Professor Brandon was a widower, with two daughters, who were receiving French lessons from Miss Adèle Ludlow. A brilliant, versatile man, he was obliged in the interests of his career to travel much, making observations in his special field and giving lectures. After five years of married life his scientific researches carried him to Brazil and Argentina for a two years' stay. Unfamiliar with the Spanish and Portuguese tongues, it occurred to him that it would be an agreeable thing to have the assistance of his talented wife. Little Faith, now four years of age, it would be well to leave with the Ludlow ladies. She would be too much care for her mother on their long travels.

Mrs. Brandon, for the second time, was called upon to part with a beloved child. Imbued with the old-fashioned idea that a woman's first duty is to her husband, she did not hesitate, though it cost her heart many a pang to leave the little girl, the darling and consolation of her middle-age. But her mother and sisters would be happy to have a child in their lonely home, and the generous payments that she would make them for Faith's board and education would afford

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them many comforts, and perhaps obviate the necessity of their continuing their classes.

The two years' absence extended to nine; and when Mrs. Brandon at length came back to Boston and to her child, it was only to die of pneumonia within a few weeks of her return.

So it came about that the home of Faith Brandon's childhood had been the small house on Mt. Vernon Street with its old-world treasures and traditions. The eager, imaginative, large-eyed child led a lonely life among the sad, delicate, disappointed women who had no experience of childhood and its ways. But fortunately she did not realize her loneliness. Within the confines of the house and garden she was allowed a large liberty, restrained only by the rules of honor and of a kindly consideration of others. She grew up from her fifth to her fourteenth year accustomed to the manners, the languages of another continent, the traditions of another age. Her reserved and somewhat stately and formal, but most affectionate and gentle-mannered relatives, taught her of their own accomplishments and renewed their youth amusing her with anecdotes of their court and foreign life. They read with her selections from the masterpieces of the classic literature of the continent; they familiarized her with its politics, its history, its customs. In English literature, with which the good ladies were less acquainted, Faith was left to browse at will. They vaguely supposed everything English to be "safe," though carefully guiding her young steps amid the pitfalls and snares that beset the path of the unwary wanderer in the literary pastures of the continent.

Her mother's death wrought a great change in Faith's life. Mr. Brandon, on his return from South America, had taken a house on the Bay State Road. His two daughters persuaded him that it was an extra and unnecessary expense to pay for Faith's board with her aunts. Besides, the child's old-fashioned, old-world breeding would be strangely out of place in modern American life. She must live in

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her father's home, must go to school with other girls, be prepared for college, have playmates of her own age and be taught practical things.

In her new life Faith learned many things besides Latin and algebra. She learned that it was sentimental and absurdly out of date to play the harp. She learned that the piano-forte music of Mendelssohn and Schulhoff and Stephen Heller was antiquated and stilted. She learned that it was affected and queer to courtesy on entering or leaving a room, or to kiss the hands of older ladies. She learned that girls of her age were not interested in Tasso's and Manzoni's heroes and Schiller's heroines, that they only stared when she talked of the battles of Bouvines or Poltava, or the Siege of Belgrade, or the exploits of Rodrigo and Scanderbeg and Charles the Twelfth, the knights of Malta or the Seven Years' War. Faith had never felt lonely in the isolation of the Ludlow home, but among girls of her own age, chattering of dancing classes and operettas, of football heroes, of chorus girls and matinée idols, she suffered the keenest pangs of loneliness, shyness and self-depreciation.

In the Ludlow home Faith had had a daintily furnished little room, opening into that of her aunt. Here her toilet was carefully supervised, her appointments ordered with exquisite neatness, her dress chosen for childish simplicity and becomingness, her diet watched, her health guarded. In her father's handsome house she was banished to a large, scantily furnished room in the mansard, among the servants. No one watched her or knew whether she kept it in order, or whether she had what was necessary for her comfort or her health. Her sisters clothed her from their cast-off costumes, and kept her supply of cheap shoes, coarse handkerchiefs and underwear at a minimum. Her school hours did not fit in with the family meals, so she was left to pick up a carelessly prepared, uninviting breakfast before starting for school, returning in the middle of the afternoon to a luncheon of cold scraps in the

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butler's pantry. If, as usually happened, there were guests at dinner, she was not expected to appear, but a nondescript meal was served to her in the maid's sewing-room. The drawing-rooms and library were reserved for the Brandon ladies and their visitors. Faith would be in the way. So as soon as her dinner was finished she was expected to take her books to her cheerless, lonely room, study her lessons for the following day, and go to bed as soon as they were learned.

This dreary life had continued for two years when Mr. Brandon was called to Europe to attend a congress of scientists, and his three daughters accompanied him abroad, where, suddenly, Faith became the most courted member of the family.

For not only was she helpful to them in her familiarity with languages, of which they had no conversational knowledge, but her stepsisters, still comparatively young women and socially ambitious, found that it was chiefly on Faith's half-brother, with his diplomatic and noble connections, and upon the aristocratic friends of Faith's grandmother and aunts that they must rely for introduction into the exclusive upper circles of London, Paris, Vienna and Rome. Rupert Milbanke, recently a widower, and heir-presumptive to a distinguished title, had become a most desirable acquaintance; and Genevieve Brandon, twenty-eight years of age, with flaxen hair and Madonna-like face, felt that she was well fitted to console the bereaved young man and eventually become Viscountess Solway. Both sisters grew, all at once, very solicitous of Faith's welfare and very attentive to the relations from whom they hoped to receive their passports into the great world.

But they were doomed to bitter disappointment. Gentle and well-bred as were the Ludlow ladies they did not lack spirit. Faith was the apple of their eye. She had been removed from them only to be neglected and themselves slighted and depreciated by the Misses Brandon. Therefore, Faith went to Europe laden down with letters to the families

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of elderly diplomats, statesmen, and nobles, to whose kind care she was tenderly recommended by their former friends, but in these letters no mention was made of Faith's step-sisters. After looking through them and finding their own names omitted, the young women confiscated the letters and consigned them all to the flames.

To Genevieve Brandon came a yet more bitter blow. When, in former years, Rupert Milbanke had visited his American connections it was as a married man in whom she took no interest. On his last visit he and his wife had arrived, unexpected, at the Brandon home. They had found Faith in the pantry trying to pick up a cold luncheon, had climbed with her to her bare, cheerless room in the servants' quarters, and had observed with indignation the neglected condition of the motherless child. Rupert Milbanke was an unforgiving man. When, two years later, Genevieve Brandon came to Europe and endeavored to charm the slim, distinguished-looking young diplomat and prospective viscount with her flaxen attractions, and to win his heart by her sweet devotion to his motherless boys, he was as cold as common decency would allow. He made much of his little half-sister, petted her and held out to her every promise of a delightful social career as soon as she should be old enough. But to her sisters, he opened not a single door. With Genevieve he even took a certain satisfaction, natural perhaps, but scarcely diplomatic, in treating her with what almost amounted to open discourtesy.

"Do you think, my flaxen Madonna," he said to himself, bitterly, "that when I have witnessed your neglect of one motherless child, I would deliberately put two others at your mercy? Or that remembering how you criticized and ridiculed the Briticisms of Rupert-married, I would trust your blandishments of Rupert-become-eligible? No, fair Genevieve, I do not forget!"

And Genevieve was to prove that she, also, had a memory!

CHAPTER V

THE HEART OF A SCHOOLGIRL

"The day retires, the mists of night are spread
Slowly o'er nature, darkening as they rise;
The gloomy clouds are gathering round our heads,
The twilight's latest glimmering gently dies,
The stars awake in heaven's abyss of blue."

— *Lomonósoff* (1711)

FAITH read her sister's letter from beginning to end. Shame and distress at being thought forward and indelicate in her conduct struggled with rebellion and anger at charges against the honor and disinterestedness of her "Big Friend."

"I did not expect anything but his friendship," she protested, sobbingly. "He did not ask for anything but my companionship. I was happy just to be his little comrade and to be with him and all of his friends and relations, like one big, pleasant family together, day after day, as we have been all this blessed month past. Why, oh why, must she put such ideas into my head? Why have I got to think of the future? I am only a child, only a little schoolgirl!"

Very glad was Faith of the excuse of her lame ankle to keep in her room through the day. Pleading a headache, she begged the baroness to leave her quietly alone, and there she surrendered herself to tearful reflections. Alas! This was only the beginning. From henceforth she must always be finding excuses to keep her away from all that had made her happy, for had she not been accused of undue eagerness to be with the prince and his circle, making herself "the talk of the town"? Those were Genevieve's words!

As in a dream, the innocent joys of the past happy weeks floated before her mind. Her life of the last month had

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seemed to her a realization of all she had heard from her aunts of the refined social and intellectual pleasures of their long sojourn in Europe. She had accepted it all naturally and unquestioningly.

As the guest of the Stourdzas, as the sister of the rising young English diplomatist, Milbanke, as the granddaughter of Minister Ludlow, still held in honored remembrance by the older generation of statesmen, Faith had, as far as was appropriate to a schoolgirl, shared in the social life of the somewhat exclusive diplomatic set, and their friends and acquaintance among the Russian aristocratic and literary circles gathered at the fashionable Crimean watering-place. Here she saw distinguished men and women, and listened to the clever talk of personages of international fame. It was in such circles and among such people that she met daily the object of her girlish admiration, her kind friend and comrade, the "Courteous Prince Fair-Sun." He never sought to be alone with her, she was always with the Stourdzas, or the Alyónkins, or with his sister and her children. But it often happened that, when they were a little apart from the others, he would draw her out to talk with him on subjects in which they had a common interest, on the books she had read, the people and places she had seen, the Russian poetry and history that she was so eager to learn about, the English history and literature she doted on and which he was so amazingly well-read in, the public affairs of Europe in which she took so lively and intelligent an interest.

And whether he talked to her, not as to a child, but as a clever man talks to a comprehending, sympathizing woman, or whether he listened to her, attentively, kindly, encouragingly, there was always in his eyes a look of quiet, deep content, as if he felt it good to be with his Little Comrade.

And Faith could not but notice this. There were many clever, entertaining and well-informed women among his acquaintance at Yalta, and she often heard them in conver-

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sation with him on all sorts of interesting topics; yet this cultivated, charming man sought out, not these older, cleverer women, but herself, the little schoolgirl! With them he was merely the courteous, agreeable man of the great world. With her he was the kind, familiar friend; he made her his little comrade, and seemed almost as happy to be with her as she was to be with him.

Another thing she had observed, a strange thing, yet it seemed really true, that her smile had power to draw him to her side. She had sometimes made an effort to be very dignified and not to show all the gladness she felt in meeting him, but to look away instantly after returning his greeting. On these occasions, and these only, had he failed to come directly to her side. But later, when her eyes would seek his, timidly and regretfully, the glance that met hers would be alight with tender inquiry; and as soon as he saw the shy, responsive half-smile, more in her eyes than on her lips, he was instantly beside her. Yet other women, prettier and more distinguished than she, smiled at him also, and far more openly and invitingly than she would dare to do, and he was barely civil to them.

And it was this gentle, elevating friendship, this delightful, improving intercourse, that Genevieve wished her to renounce!

Amid such recollections as these did the dreary afternoon and evening and the watches of a wakeful night pass by. The next morning brought fresh problems.

Not merely daily but several times a day had Faith come in contact with her hero. She did her best not to appear to be looking for him, but she had come to expect that he would drop in on them every morning, to bring a book, or to suggest a walk on the hillside, a sail on the bay, or an excursion to some neighboring object of interest. But now it had become her duty to avoid these meetings.

Fate seemed ready to help her. She had breakfasted in her

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room when, soon after, the baroness brought a message from Solntsoff to say that he was leaving by the mail-coach to spend the day with a friend at Simferópol. So a little before noon Faith ventured down, and wishing to escape the gossip of the verandas, walked up the hill path to the little summer-house. There she seated herself, surrounded by the friendly company of the tall pines and sturdy cedars, witnesses of so many of her happy hours. Sighing deeply, she drew forth the fateful letter, and read it through once more. The soft ocean breeze stirred the tree-tops. They bent pityingly toward her, and gave forth a tender, plaintive chant. With half-blinded eyes and quivering lips she read on and on to the final words, "After he leaves Yalta you will never see him again."

Something seemed to grip at Faith's heart with a sharp, painful clutch, and burying her face in her hands she burst into a storm of tears.

"How can I bear it?" sobbed the girl. "How can I bear to be separated from him, not to see him again for a long time, perhaps years, perhaps never? Not to watch out for him every day, not to see the pleasant look in his eyes, not to have him smile at me any more, not to hear his voice, not to look forward to talking and walking with him, not to know if I am ever to be anything to him again, not to know if I shall ever see him again in all this wide world? Oh, how can I bear it?"

There was a long pause. The breeze had died down, the trees had ceased their mournful song, the silence was almost oppressive. Across the still, balmy air came the deep tones of the cathedral bells, booming out the hour of noon, inexorably, fatefully. Time and tide wait for no man's sighs or fears or passing joys. Life goes on and must be lived. Faith gathered up her papers and rose wearily to obey its summons.

And suddenly bright sunshine flooded the dim places

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of her stricken heart; she blinked away the tears, held her head erect and brave, and, summoning all her dignity, tried to look not too radiantly happy. For there, at the entrance to the little summerhouse, stood her "Big Friend," her "Prince Fair-Sun!"

"Will you not tell me your trouble?" he asked kindly. "Let us sit down here a moment on this bench and talk it over."

Faith grew dreadfully embarrassed. It was such a tempting proposal, and it seemed like such a lack of confidence to refuse. She blushed very much and there was an expression of genuine distress in the luminous hazel eyes that looked up into his friendly blue ones.

"I am so sorry," she hesitated; "I am afraid I ought not to."

"Oh, it will be quite permissible," said the prince, smilingly. "Madame Stourdza gave me leave to come in search of you and to escort you home. She thinks it proper, you see, and a few moments' rest on the way is not stretching the point too far," and he drew the bench forward and held out his hand invitingly.

"I am afraid she hasn't the authority," stammered poor Faith, only too ready to let herself be tempted. "My sister writes — Oh, please don't mind! — but she says I must never go alone with you at all, and I should be stretching my conscience as much as I dare in just walking directly home with you."

The prince had never seen Faith's sister, but he was seized with the conviction that she must be an extremely disagreeable person.

"You see," Faith added, apologetically, "if she were here to know about it I might not be so scrupulous in obeying her, but she lays down the rule in this letter and is trusting me to keep it, so how can I break it behind her back?"

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"I understand," he replied, gravely, watching her with keen, intent glance. "It is not so much a question of propriety as a point of honor! In that case, I will not urge you." And there flashed into his memory the words of Holy Scripture in praise of the virtuous woman, "*The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her!*"

"You know I would like to stop with you if I could?" she asked, almost tearfully, as they started on together.

"Yes, I know you would like to," he answered, and indeed he would have been blind had he not known it. "You are sorry, and I, too, am disappointed, but I am not hurt at all, for your sister is quite right to be careful of you. However, I shall cause you no more scruples to-day, for I am going away to meet a very dear friend of mine, the archpriest of the Yurieff Lávra,* to consult him on some important matters, and to make my confession to him. I do not return before to-morrow evening."

"Confession?" echoed Faith, startled and wondering.

"Don't be alarmed!" he said, laughingly. "There is no very heavy crime on my conscience! But if one wishes to keep clean it is good to take a spiritual scrubbing from time to time, without waiting to do so till one's soul is already soiled with sin."

Faith felt queer. Although the men of her family went to church, and she had an uncle who was a bishop, she was not at all accustomed to hearing gentlemen in polite society talk about sin. Usually, if one acknowledged having a soul at all, the fact of its existence was kept discreetly in the background.

"Of course, I have never been to confession myself," she said, hesitatingly. "I have been brought up rather a Low-Church Episcopalian by my aunts, and my father is a Unitarian. But my uncle is a bishop and is very High-Church, though I don't think he goes quite so far as con-

* Monastery of St. George.

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fession. My brother, however, is a Ritualist, — he has taken me sometimes to the Ritualist churches in England, and you know they are reviving the practice of confession and call themselves ‘Catholics.’”

She looked up at him inquiringly and timidly.

“Do you think we have Apostolic Orders?” she asked, with anxiety.

“Vyérochka, little dove!” he exclaimed, bending compassionately toward her. “I am sorry to hurt you, but, if you ask me a question, I must suppose you want a true answer. Unfortunately, the opinion of the Russian Holy Synod and of the Orthodox synods in general is that the Anglican ordinations have been null and void for over three centuries.”

“I was afraid so,” sighed Faith, and the tears rolled over. “The Catholic Church denies them, too, and the Protestants think them an absurd pretension! Oh, dear! I love my church, I want to be loyal to it, but I get puzzled sometimes. I wish we were all alike, all one church together and no differences between us.”

“Many older and wiser than you wish the same thing,” he said, gently. “Don’t cry, Vyéra, dear! You have thought more and you feel more deeply about these points than most young girls.” And indeed it seemed to him that very few sixteen-year-old school-maidens would be shedding tears over the schisms of the Christian world.

“Have you ever seen a service in one of our Orthodox Russian churches?” he asked, after a moment.

“Yes, three or four times,” she answered, eagerly. “Of course I did not understand what was going on, and there was no one to explain it to me. But I had heard,” very reverently, “that you believed in the Real Presence, and I had never before seen such worship, such adoring faith! It seemed like the completion and fulfilment of the old Jewish worship of the Bible, only more beautiful, because it was not

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merely symbolic and figurative, but the actual worship of the real Emmanuel, the Christian Saviour. It was as like as anything earthly could be to the vision in the Apocalypse of the Adoration of God and the Lamb in the Heavenly Jerusalem." Her young face was flushed with enthusiasm, and her beautiful eyes, swimming with unshed tears, gazed before her as at some distant scene of glory. Her sweet voice was tremulous with emotion.

The prince was silent, though watching her intently.

She came back to earth with a long sigh. "You are so secure in your position!" she said, enviously. "The Eastern Church has always had these things unchanged since the earliest Councils of the Christian era. With us Episcopalians it is so different! Everything has been more or less changed till we hardly know where we stand, and yet it is the one important thing to know."

"Do not let doubts about what you have not, shake your faith in what you actually have," he advised. "You have received baptism, you have Christ's holy gospels, you have fragments of the old liturgies. Though your Reformers rejected much that we believe essential and holy, yet they retained much that is true and helpful. Cling to these things, observe and pray, and God will make all plain to you, never fear! You have not your beautiful name for nothing."

Faith felt wondrously comforted. How truly he was the friend of the soul, and how near this talk seemed to bring her spirit to his! It had at once put their friendship on a higher plane than mere human sentiment, however sweet and absorbing. For they two had Christian souls as well as human hearts, they had God to love and live for as well as each other. Whatever might be the outcome of their summer's companionship, she felt content to await the issue patiently. She could never again be so rebellious and despairing since his faith had enkindled hers.

In the prince's absence, Faith felt that she had best go

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about with his family and friends in the usual way, that they might see she had not heretofore gone with them merely on his account. When he returned, it would be soon enough to break off from these all too pleasant habits.

The next morning Countess Chernyatina invited her to drive. Faith went in some trepidation, for she stood a little in awe of her Big Friend's sister, — a gracious and charming woman in general, but, it must be confessed, somewhat reserved toward her brother's Little Comrade.

"What has that mature, scholarly man, with his ardent patriotism and his deep religious faith, in common with a little unformed schoolgirl, not of his race or rank or religion? What good can come of it all?" So thought the sister. But the prince had asked her to show some attention to the young foreigner in his absence and she was too wise to try to thwart his inclinations. She was very kind to Faith during the drive. After all, the child was very intelligent and lovable, with a pretty, maidenly dignity of manner. If Lyóva was serious in his intentions, they could only hope for the best.

That afternoon, seeing old Prince Kliázemski established in his wheel chair on the veranda of his *dacha*, and knowing that his nephew was not expected till late that evening, Faith stole across the garden and came up to him shyly. The hospitable old gentleman welcomed her cordially, his faded but kindly blue eyes lighted up, he declared himself dying for a talk and made her sit by him and have tea with him.

And a delightful talk it proved, — one after Faith's own heart. He told his eager young listener of the stirring days of his youth, of the Crimean War, of the storming of Kars in which he had taken part. He told her of the liberation of the serfs, of the patriarchal life of the old princely families upon their great estates, before the altered conditions of land and labor had brought so many to ruin. He told her

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of the Turkish War, of how the armies of Holy Russia had stood at the very gates of Constantinople, till the jealousy of Christian Europe had forced her to yield the fruit of her victories and leave the Turk his foothold on the Christian continent.

Here they were interrupted by a lackey from the hotel, who crossed over to notify Faith that two ladies were waiting for her in the parlor. Greatly wondering who they might be she took leave of her kind friend and, entering the reception room, found to her amazement her two sisters—Genevieve, delicate, flaxen-haired, Madonna-faced, and Sophy, sensible, kindly, and unpretentious.

"We decided to follow my letter," drawled Genevieve. "You have been a burden to Madame Stourdza long enough. Unfortunately our passage is not engaged for Athens till next week and we have had to take rooms for a few days at the Pension Seiler here, but you can go right to your room now and throw your things into your boxes and have them brought over before dinner."

Faith was distressed. The idea of leaving this delightful hotel and all her new friends to go with her sisters to the Pension Seiler, with its crowd of middle-class German and English tourists, was anything but an enticing prospect.

"It hardly seems worth while to move for such a short while," she suggested, but Genevieve gave her a withering look.

"I have settled everything with the Stourdzas," she said. "If I had wished for your opinion I would have waited to consult with you. It is high time you left those people. The baroness is a perfectly impracticable, irresponsible woman, and the baron is a very dissipated-looking man. I did not like at all his familiar way of talking about you. Not a word, Miss! Don't begin by flying into one of your tempers! This sort of life is utterly demoralizing for a girl

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of your age. I don't know what your brother can be thinking about to encourage it."

"I will go up with you and help you pack," interrupted Sophy, nervously afraid that Genevieve was going too far.

"No!" commanded Genevieve. "The child must learn to be self-reliant and look after her own things. Faith, go upstairs at once and attend to the packing and moving of your boxes!"

With a heavy heart Faith obeyed. She found the baroness already in her room, laying the dresses in the trays and stopping from time to time to mop her eyes. The baron was raging up and down the little sitting-room, biting nervously at an unlighted cigar. When Faith appeared he darted to where the trunk stood, slammed down the cover and sat upon it.

"Let them come and get you, if they can!" he said. "I am here, and here I stay! Cinderella shall not go back to drudgery!"

"Ahem! Who is it maintains that woman should be docile and obedient in her family life?" suggested his wife.

"Certainly, to her husband or her parents!" retorted the baron. "I would not stand between Fidès and her husband, or her father, or even her brother. But stepsisters have been a curse from time immemorial, as all literature attests, and no young girl should be made the slave of their will. It was Milbanke who entrusted Fidès to our care, and to him only shall we surrender her."

"It is of no use to resist, dear Baron," said Faith, dolefully. "It has got to be! Genevieve always has her way, and the longer you delay me the worse it will be for me in the end. If you could take the consequences yourself," she added, laughingly, "I shouldn't mind, but unfortunately it is I who will have to suffer for your revolt."

He sprang up at once and resigned the trunk to the two women, although grumbling heartily the while. But his

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rebellion and discontent showed itself in his restless pacing of the little sitting-room floor and his frequent visits to the scene of the packers' activities.

"Kirill, you drive me distracted!" exclaimed his wife. "Can't you find something to occupy yourself with? We shall never have done at this rate. Go and play billiards with Alyónkin, or flirt with that pretty Polish widow, anything, only leave us in peace!"

"Not a bad idea!" exclaimed the husband. Straightening his tie, twirling his moustaches, and glancing into the mirror with a well-satisfied smile, he sauntered downstairs in search of congenial occupation.

An hour later, when he returned to the rooms, he found Faith and her boxes gone and his wife looking rather forlorn.

"I feel as if she had always been with us," she sighed. "How did we use to live before she came?"

Involuntarily the minds of both turned to the thought of the little girl they had lost nine years before. They never mentioned her to each other, for each suffered from the pangs of self-reproach; she, because her love of balls and gay society had led her to neglect the child during the four short years of its life; he, because his neglect of his wife had perhaps been the cause of her seeking distraction in worldly amusement. The loss had brought both to their senses — their outward lives had, in a measure, changed, but a certain bitterness of spirit often marred their relations to each other. Since Faith had been with them things had begun to go more smoothly.

"She is so easy to get on with," said the baroness, with another sigh, "so responsive and pleasant and companionable!"

"Adelaide would have had the same disposition," said he, looking down gloomily.

His wife glanced up quickly. It was the first time he

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had mentioned the child's name in many years, and his sombre, dark eyes were filled with unaccustomed tears. She sprang up and went to him impetuously.

"Kirill!" she cried, throwing her arms around his neck, "I am not half kind enough to you!"

"Ada," he replied, clasping her to his breast, "you have had a great deal to bear from me!"

CHAPTER VI

ALYÓSHA MAKES TROUBLE

"On heaven high two suns never burn,
Two moons never shine in the stilly night,
Never has dove more than one fond mate;
An honest lad hath not two beloved friends."

— *Russian Folk-song.*

IN THE shady garden of the episcopal palace at Simferópol, overlooking the picturesque banks of the Salghir River, two men sat enjoying the delicious freshness of the morning air, and conversed earnestly together. One was elderly, thin and ascetic looking, with intellectual brow, mild eyes and a singularly fine mouth, whose lines expressed mingled sweetness and strength. He wore the costume of the "black," or celibate, monastic clergy of the Orthodox Church. His companion, tall, blue-eyed and large of limb, was a layman in civilian dress of gray tweeds. He held his straw hat in his hand and the gentle summer breeze toyed with his short, fair, waving hair.

"You think, then, Vladíko,* that I am justified in speaking to her of the future, in spite of her extreme youth? You do not believe it necessary or advisable to put her childish feeling for me to the test of silence and separation?"

The monk smiled gently. "Dear son!" he said, "troubles enough are sure to arise in the ordinary course of life to test her constancy without the necessity of inventing further tests of your own. No! If it is your great blessing to have met a good and innocent girl, gifted with unusual intelligence and rare qualities of mind and heart, such as you describe

* "My Lord," title of the higher clergy, the equivalent of *Monsignore*.

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her to me; and you believe that it has been your good fortune to attract her childish confidence and affection, then cherish this affection tenderly and jealously, as a precious flower of heaven. Do all in your power to nurture and strengthen it till it grows to the full blossoming of womanly love. Such a heart as hers is 'above rubies,' and you will win and guard this treasure at every cost."

The younger man's eyes flashed and he drew a long breath of relief. "I am glad, Vladíko, that you encourage me to follow the first impulse of my man's heart. I wish to tell her of my affection, I wish her to grow up knowing it, believing in it, and preparing herself for a future by my side. I only feared it might not be the path of justice to bind her at so early an age and before I have time to obtain the consent of her family."

"You will not bind her to anything! There must be no promise. You will impress upon her that she is absolutely free. Indeed, if you had opportunities to see her frequently, and to make it plain to her by your attentions and the happiness you take in her society that she is dear to you, then you might safely put off speaking openly to her of your desires until she is a little older. But there will of necessity be long periods of separation, during which she should not remain in ignorance of your feeling for her. Her constancy may not survive the years of waiting, her affection may fail you, she may give her heart to another, but it will not be — unknowingly. At least she will have had the choice. She can never make you the reproach that is too frequently the bitterest portion in human heart-sorrow, the source of so many miserable mistakes, — 'Had I but known!' You will tell her, then, the wish of your manly heart, asking no response, no word of promise, only laying the question before her that she may ponder over it and all that it involves. Remember that she is a mere child and restrain your emotions, lest you frighten away the precious

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affection of the childish heart before the heart of the woman is capable of responding. But she must listen to you, she must feel that a man's future life is in her hands. There is much, very much in this to make her thoughtful."

"Much, indeed!" interrupted the young man, gravely. "So much that at times it seems to me almost impossible that it should come about. The difference in our ages, in our race and traditions, above all in our religion! That is the supreme test, Otéts."*

"You tell me that she shows unusual interest and thought in questions of controversy, and that she seems to be drawn toward our Orthodox† worship. She must not be hurried," advised the father, "nor must she feel bound, as if the marriage depended upon her conversion. Let her love for you and her love for your faith grow with her growth. With the certainty of your affection, and with the knowledge she will gradually acquire of the Church's doctrines, she will develop slowly and beautifully toward the Heavenly Faith, and will keep with you her earthly faith."

The young man's head was reverently bowed, his keen blue eyes were softened and veiled. He knelt on the green sward at the feet of his spiritual father who, signing him three times with the sign of the cross, blessed him fervently, then raising him, took him into his arms, embraced him tenderly and bade him God-speed.

Standing at the gate he gazed long and affectionately at the tall form, stepping lightly and rapidly to meet the incoming train.

"If Russia had more laymen like this young prince," he thought, "fearing God and keeping His commandments, loving the Church, and serving his country, his emperor and his fellow-man with all his heart and at every sacrifice, how few and simple its problems would be!"

* Pronounced Aht-yetz — Father.

† *Pravo-slavny*, i. e., "right-worshipping." *Pravo-slávnyaya Tser-kóv*, the Right-Worshipping, or Orthodox Church.

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Solntsoff returned from his trip about nine o'clock in the evening, tired and hungry, to find dinner over, his uncle and sister, with Count and Countess Alyónkin at the tea table in the sitting-room. He glanced at the tea, caviar sandwiches and sweetmeats, and they did not look satisfactory to a stalwart man who had not dined and had been traveling half the day. Yet, if he walked into town to dine at one of the restaurants, it might bring him back too late to see his Little Comrade that evening. He was torn in spirit between the hunger of the body and the hunger of the heart.

Just then Alekséy Pávlovich came timidly into the room. His mother looked up reprovingly, for he had been sent to bed half an hour previously.

"Please, mamma!" he begged, "I have something I must tell uncle and I cannot sleep till I do. I have been waiting up for him."

His uncle lifted the little boy kindly on his knee and pushed the tangled brown curls back from the pure childish brow.

"What is it troubles you, Alyósha?" he asked.

"Uncle! I—I made Vyéra Kárlovna cry! She cried hard!"

The uncle looked very grave. "What did you do to make her cry?"

"I did nothing to make her cry! I love her too much for that," said Alyósha, fixing his big, anxious eyes on his uncle's face. "But I said something to the ladies that made them laugh, and afterward she cried and said she cried because they laughed."

"That is why I dislike to have the child go so much among the foreigners," said his mother, irritably. "They are always trying to make him talk, and they laugh at every foolish thing he says and encourage him to be silly and self-conscious."

"Let us hear the whole story," said Solntsoff, decidedly. "Alyósha, tell me exactly how it all happened."

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"Well, Vyéra's sisters have come, and they were sitting with some ladies on the veranda, and the ladies asked me how many uncles I had. I said two, you and my grandfather. First they laughed at that; and then another lady asked how many aunts I had. So I said that I had none, but that I used to think I had an aunt because there was a lady lived with you in your apartment in Peterburg* whom you were very fond of, and I thought that if she was my uncle's wife she must be my aunt; but mother would not let me call her 'aunt,' because she was not married to you but was just your friend."

Natália Petróvna bit her lip. A dull-red flush slowly overspread Solntsoff's countenance.

"Then they began to nudge each other and laugh, and I laughed, too, though I could not see why it was funny," went on the child.

"It was not funny," said the mother, angrily. "It was stupid!"

But the uncle said never a word, and looked so stern and so red that poor little Alexis was frightened and his lips began to tremble. Just then he heard a queer sound from his grandfather, whose shoulders were shaking in a strange way. Then there was a sudden loud guffaw from Graf Alyónkin. Alekséy Pávlovich was relieved. It must be funny after all!

"They asked me if she was your housekeeper," he went on, encouraged, "but I said she was too well-dressed for that."

A fresh guffaw from Alyónkin! The old prince's shoulders were shaking worse than ever and he was chuckling audibly. Alyósha was elated with his success.

"Then they asked me if she was old or young," he continued, tossing his curly head, "and I said she was not young."

"Well, thank God for that!" muttered his uncle.

* Russian name for Saint Petersburg. The common people call it "Piter."

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"I said," deliberated Alyósha, whose ideas of age were vague and who did not wish to go to extremes, "I said she wasn't young like Vyéra Kárllovna, that she was really going on thirty, though you wouldn't think it to look at her."

"Good heavens!" gasped his uncle.

"Oh, Alekséy!" sighed his mother.

"Found out!" cried Alyónkin, throwing himself back in his chair and shouting with laughter. "Oh, Lévochka,* you sad dog! Here you have been posing before these innocent damsels and correct matrons as a knight without reproach, a model young man, a regular Galahad; but your sins have found you out at last! Unmasked! Discovered! 'Out of the mouths of babes!'" and he shouted afresh in a very ecstasy of mirth.

The old prince was chuckling quietly to himself, when he glanced furtively at his nephew and his amusement ceased. He became grave.

"Alyósha," said Solntsoff, kindly but very earnestly, "try to tell me all. When did Vyéra Kárllovna cry?"

"Not then," answered Alyósha, beginning anew to have doubts. "She led me away, saying she did not think it was nice to question a child, and she started to bring me home. But as soon as we were out of sight of the Pension she sat down on the ground and just cried, and cried, and cried!"

He saw that his uncle's face was very white now, and that even Grigóri Sergévich had sobered down. His misgivings increased.

"I tried to comfort her," he explained, apologetically, "but I could not. Then I was frightened and began to cry, too, and she put her arms round me and said I must not mind. It was not my fault that she was crying, but only because the ladies had laughed and been unkind. And she said I ought to tell you about it, so I promised I would. But you have

* Familiar diminutive of Lev.

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been away and I was very unhappy, for I was afraid to go to bed till I had told."

"When did all this happen?" asked the stern uncle.

"This afternoon, after luncheon." Alyósha looked up piteously. His lip quivered. "Forgive me, *Dyádushka*, dear uncle!"

The prince took the little boy up in his arms very tenderly. "I am glad you have told me, very glad you kept your promise like a gentleman. It is just as Vyéra Kárllovna explained, — you did not say anything that would have made her cry had not the ladies been unkind. There is nothing to forgive, little heart's-brother!"

He carried the child on his shoulder to the nursery, kissed him an affectionate good night, blessed him, and left him in the governess's care. Then he re-entered the drawing room.

"So the stepsisters have returned?" he asked.

"Yes, they appeared this morning and they have taken rooms at the Pension Seiler, the other side of the hotel grounds. Vyéra has left the Stourdzas and is with them there. Take some tea, Lyóva, it will do you good after your fatigue and this annoyance," urged his sister.

Somehow he had lost his appetite. "No, I could not swallow it," he said. "I must go and find her."

"What explanation can you give to a child like that?" she asked.

He did not answer. He only shook his head and passed out.

"He is pretty hard hit," said Alyónkin, soberly.

Natália Petróvna sighed, "I suppose I might as well reconcile myself to it and take the child to my heart!" she said, resignedly.

Lyéff Petróvich crossed the garden and the road, and walked through the straight, tree-lined approach to the Pension Seiler. He rang the bell twice before it was answered by a maid.

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"Announce me to the Misses Brandon and Miss Faith Brandon," he said.

He could hear the chatter of feminine voices in the salon.

"Will not Your Splendor come in?" asked the maid.

"No, I will stop outside till you have taken in my cards."

In a few moments the salon door opened and a delicate featured, flaxen-haired, Madonna-like personage advanced into the hall. Solntsoff stood near the entrance, hat in hand, bowing low.

She bowed somewhat stiffly in return, but did not ask him in.

"I am Genevieve Brandon," she explained. "My sister Faith has already retired, Prince Solntsoff. She has a severe headache and went to her room immediately after dinner."

"I am very sorry to hear it," he replied, with concern. "I particularly regret not seeing her, as my little nephew tells me that he had the misfortune to make her cry this afternoon. May I explain to her through you that —"

"My sister is a mere child," interrupted Genevieve, severely. "Those are things that cannot be explained to her."

"But, surely," he objected, "if she understands enough to be distressed there can be no harm in your explaining to her that there is no cause for such distress."

"It may be easy for a man of the world like you, Prince Solntsoff, to make a sort of explanation that would satisfy a young and unsophisticated schoolgirl like my sister Faith," said Miss Brandon, with an icy stare. "It would be more difficult to make an explanation that would satisfy me, who take the place of a mother to her."

"At least I may ask that you, in justice, listen to me?"

"I do not see why I should do so! You will, of course, justify yourself, but that proves nothing! Faith has not her father or her brother here to protect her. I must take it

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upon myself to say that, under the circumstances, I do not think it desirable that you should be given any further opportunity to speak with her."

Solntsoff met her eye steadily. "As you please," he replied, and, bowing, turned and left her.

He strode out through the shady approach into the road. His blood was boiling. Hot, angry words rushed to his throat; he stuttered in his wrath that he could cut that cold-blooded, lying woman's throat; he condemned her in his ire to the nethermost inferno. He did not for an instant believe that Faith had gone to her room voluntarily. His Little Comrade had sent him a message through Alyósha, she would be expecting his answer and would wait up for him all night, if she were free to do so. That odious woman was keeping them apart!

He strode up the mountain road, higher and higher, a tempest raging in his soul. He would snatch the child away from them at any cost! He was halfway up the steep hillside before he had pulled himself under control. Then he turned slowly and sullenly, and walked back to the *dacha*.

By the time he entered the drawing-room his calm was restored. He looked pale and tired and his smile was forced; but he sat down to his customary game of chess with his uncle, was decently polite to the halfscore guests who dropped in, and after he went to his room wrote his usual number of sheets of manuscript.

"I hope it makes sense," he sighed, as he wearily pushed the papers away and prepared for bed. "God bless and comfort you, and make you to have faith in me, Little Comrade!"

It was well toward morning before he found oblivion in sleep. When he awoke it was far beyond his usual rising hour. His man brought in tea, and then he was conscious of a slight faintness and remembered that he had not dined the previous evening. It was too early yet for the hearty midday

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luncheon at the hotel, so he walked rapidly down to one of the restaurants on the Naberézhnaya* overlooking the bathing beach. Seeing Stourdza at a table sipping a cup of black coffee, he joined him and ordering a solid, English breakfast set to work to do it full justice. The melancholy baron looked on in amazement.

"Where did you dine last night?" he asked, at length.

"I dined on air, bad news and hot temper, and found them not very nourishing," laughed the prince, bitterly. "Stourdza, you have it in your power to do me a great service."

"Dear Knyáz, Lyéff Petróvich, I am yours to command!"

"I understand," said Solntsoff, slowly, "that Miss Brandon is no longer your wife's guest?"

"No, the proud stepsisters have returned."

"That I know to my discomfiture," remarked the prince; and he then told the baron of Alyósha's confidence, of his own attempt to see Faith and of Genevieve's dismissal of him.

Like Alyónkin and the old prince, Stourdza seemed to find something irresistibly funny in the situation, but soon became earnest when he saw the matter from Solntsoff's point of view.

"I too, could laugh if it concerned only myself," said the latter, "but I cannot afford to do so when I think of the tears and the fears of that sweet, innocent girl. She sees in what light the grown-up, experienced women about her interpret a child's thoughtless prattle. It is a shock she should have been spared, but at least she must not suffer a moment longer than necessary."

"No," agreed the baron, "but how are we to reach her? I suppose you know that she is off for the day with a party of young people from the Pension, a boat trip and picnic to Alúshta."

*Quay or embankment.

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"I did not know. Miss Genevieve vouchsafed me no information with regard to her sister's plans."

Stourdza's handsome face had lost its melancholy and assumed an expression of keenest interest and animation. Nothing delighted him more than plot and intrigue. He was in his element.

"I wager the picnic was planned for the express purpose of keeping Miss Fidès away from the dangers of your dissolute society!" chuckled he. "But I have a famous counterplot. The proud stepsister is not with them, but my wife went unexpectedly, to matronize some young girls. Now, what if I take it into my head to meet my wife, and board the steamer on its homeward trip as it stops at Gurzúf landing, eight or ten miles above here? That gives me a pleasant little sail of an hour in the cool of the evening! What more natural than that I should ask you to join me, since no one has warned me that you are *persona non grata*? Very well! We board the steamer, you make your explanations to my wife, who will in turn make a discreet explanation to the young lady. Well, what do you say?"

"I am very grateful to you, but this skirmishing with an unfair and prejudiced woman goes against the grain. If there were only a man in the family!"

"I have no scruples!" laughed the baron. "There is nothing I should relish better than the discomfiture, by fair means or foul, of the proud sisters!"

The day dragged wearily on. It seemed to Solntsoff that his writing had grown hateful to him, that the newspapers had never been so disgustingly stupid and wrong headed. Even the society of his beloved uncle was perilously near being distasteful, while the children had turned from charming little angels into insupportable little imps. The September day was unseasonably hot, with brooding storm clouds. Detestable strangers intruded into the garden, taking possession of all his favorite nooks. The whole world was awry!

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In the hottest part of the hot afternoon a motor car drove along the seaside road toward Gurzúf. Within it sat two manly figures in gray tweeds, one big and fair, the other short and dark. The storm clouds that had looked so threatening but a short while before were now dissipated. The heat was stifling, the dust lay thick on the road, the men swallowing it with every breath.

"We shall make it easily. The boat is just rounding the cliffs of Cape *Aiu Dag*, and we are a scant mile from the landing," said the melancholy dark man to his fair companion.

Suddenly the car gave a foreboding lurch. The two men were pitched sideways and with difficulty recovered themselves and climbed out.

"It is impossible to make the repairs under half an hour," announced the mechanic. "Their Excellencies must walk to the boat."

"Walk!" muttered the baron, "It will have to be — *run!*" And his language had best not be transcribed.

Settling hastily with the chauffeur the two companions left the machine to its fate and started rapidly down the glaring, dusty road. The heat was sticky and oppressive, but they pushed on, taking off their coats and removing their collars. They could see the steamer rounding the headland and they broke into a run, the two pairs of legs, the long, shapely limbs of the princely Russ and the shorter, slimmer ones of the noble Galician clearing the ground in fine style for a time. Then the older man halted and called out:

"Run ahead, Knyáz! — I can't keep up this pace — you are a younger man — and you've led a better life — straighten it out for me with my wife!"

Solntsoff stopped instantly and turned back. "I beg your pardon, Baron!" he exclaimed. "We will stand or fall together."

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But the plucky Austrian soon recovered himself, and five minutes later the two men were walking up the gang-plank of the steamer, breathless, dusty, soaked with perspiration, mopping their brows with their handkerchiefs and fanning themselves with their hats. They lingered a few moments in the lower cabin to brush their clothes and boots, wash their faces and hands, replace their collars and ties, smooth their hair and twirl their moustaches. When, a little later, they emerged out on to the upper deck they were cool, self-possessed, elegant and immaculate.

They looked about them. The deck was crowded with excursionists, but they saw no signs of the baroness, of Faith, or of any party of young people. They searched anxiously in every nook and cranny of the boat. Not a familiar face did they see.

Both men began to look pale and disturbed. The baron's hands were clenched and his upper lip twitched nervously. There had been occasional moments in his life when he had felt as if he were more or less indifferent to his wife, and that in the event of her removal from this earthly sphere he might, without too great difficulty, find adequate consolation. But there were other moments, of which the present was one, when he became conscious that his love for her was still very strong indeed, that to lose her would be like tearing off a limb.

"There can have been no accident; some of the party would have telegraphed in such a case before the steamer left Alúshta," he tried to say, but his lips were dry, and his voice sounded a mile away.

Just then an official came up. "Pardon! Permit me! Are their Excellencies looking for friends?" he asked. "A party of young people, perhaps, under the care of a stout, middle-aged lady, on the morning boat?"

"Yes! Yes!" answered Solntsoff eagerly, but the baron

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stared in indignation. Who dared to describe his wife as stout and middle-aged!

"The sea was rough this morning, so the party got off at Gurzúf, saying they would return by post to Yalta this evening," explained the official.

The two noblemen looked at one another blankly. "Sold!" exclaimed the baron at last. Then they parted instinctively, and for the rest of the homeward trip each paced the deck in solitary ill-humor; the prince forward, the baron aft.

CHAPTER VII

STEPSISTERS

"Where is the heart that doth not keep
Within its inmost core,
Some fond remembrance hidden deep?
Who hath not saved some trifling thing,
More prized than jewels rare?"

THE threatened storm came up toward sunset, with high wind and driving rain, and a severe fall in the temperature. When the crisis had passed, the weather settled down to a light, steady drizzle or Scotch mist.

Faith also had found the day long and weary. Under other circumstances it would have interested her greatly to wander about the magnificent park of Gurzúf, to see the castle where Púshkin had lived, to visit the fine Mohammedan mosque and the Tatar village and restaurants. But somehow to-day everything went wrong. She felt impatient and irritable.

"Faith!" said the baroness, severely, "what are manners for? What is the object of good breeding?"

Faith colored deeply. "I beg your pardon, Baroness, I forgot myself," she said, humbly. "I will try to be more patient and obliging."

"Manners," observed the baroness, "—mind you, I know I haven't any myself—are to help us conceal and control our moods, and so make life pleasanter for those about us, and incidentally for ourselves, also. There! write that down in your copy-book!"

Faith smiled and tried her best, but it was uphill work.

For great tribulation had befallen her. The previous

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evening, the evening of Kynáz Solntsoff's expected return, Genevieve had called her to her room shortly after dinner.

"I have something to say to you, Faith," she began, with the usual drawl in her voice that presaged trouble. "You are too young to know much about the world, and your constant association with foreigners is giving us great anxiety. They have such different ideas of right and wrong conduct from what we have, and you are not old enough to appreciate the meaning of many things. Now this afternoon, for instance, that little Russian boy unconsciously disclosed a state of affairs that we older women at once recognized as most shocking and wicked, but of course you did not know what we inferred from it."

"Why, yes, I did," said Faith, ingenuously. "I couldn't help knowing what you thought, from the way you looked at each other."

"You knew what we thought!" echoed her sister, in horrified accents. "Then it is worse than I feared. Your foreign friends have already contaminated you. You have no right at your age to know what inference we drew."

"But how can I help knowing it?" asked Faith, puzzled. "All the standard books in English literature deal with just such situations — 'Vicar of Wakefield,' 'Pride and Prejudice,' 'Henry Esmond,'" checking them off on her fingers, "'David Copperfield,' 'Romola,' 'Idylls of the King.' Of course I knew at once that you thought it was like *Steerforth* and *Little Em'ly*, or *Squire Thornhill* and *Olivia*, or like *Tito Melema*."

"Faith, I am shocked! I am horrified! You are a coarse, evil-minded girl. A good girl would see no wrong in such books!"

"I'm not evil-minded!" retorted Faith, driven to bay, "but I'm not so dull that I get no ideas from the very books that you yourself advised me to read!"

"Insolent girl!" hissed Genevieve, her delicate features

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distorted with rage. "I'll teach you to defend your dissolute foreign friends at my expense!" and, springing at Faith, she seized her by the braided hair and slapped her violently half a dozen times across the face.

For a moment Faith was so dazed and startled that she could do nothing. Then, grasping her stepsister by the shoulders, she shook her with all her young strength.

"You little fury! Don't you dare to hold me! Let me go instantly!" commanded the older woman, the words hissing between her teeth.

The blood surged to Faith's brain, the marks of Genevieve's fingers showed white in her scarlet cheeks. She held her sister's arms as in a vise. Then, like a dash of cold water, came the thought—"What if he saw me now! he, the 'courteous prince,' the 'good Prince Fair-Sun!' What if he knew all his Little Comrade was doing?"

Her fingers loosened their clasp, her hands fell by her side as if paralyzed. She held her tongue tightly between her teeth. She had, indeed, been "a little fury."

"You may undress and go to bed instantly," said Genevieve, with intense gravity. "I will consult with Sophy about this truly shocking state I find you in, and we will determine on your punishment and on what course to pursue with you in the future. But in the meantime I put you on your honor to go to bed at once."

And Genevieve sailed out of the room, well knowing the magic hold the word "honor" had on Faith's conscience and obedience.

A few moments later, the fair, Madonna-like face of Genevieve Brandon, tinged with an appealing sadness, was seen among the German and English ladies on the terrace of the Pension Seiler.

"No one knows what I have to endure from that child!" she sighed. "Of course, if she were my own sister I could take stronger measures with her, but my position is a very

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delicate one, and the poor, motherless, uncontrolled girl appeals to my tenderness in a way that makes me unequal to dealing firmly with her. But these scenes shake me to the very soul! No one would believe me if I should tell them all, but there are times when she seems more like a veritable little demon than a human Christian child."

"I am sure no mother could do more for her than you," murmured one of the ladies present. "She ought to be very grateful."

"My sister and I do not ask for gratitude," said Genevieve, meekly and resignedly. "We only hope that our sacrifices may bear fruit in time."

Meanwhile the "human, Christian child" upstairs, her face still stinging from the blows, was lying sobbing on the bed, torn with shame and remorse and the bitterness of self-denunciation.

"Oh, Mother, Mother!" she moaned, "if I only had you! You would be so patient and loving! You wouldn't think me dreadful, but you would love your little daughter and take her in your arms and tell her what was right and what was wrong. Oh, Mother! can't you pray up there in Heaven for your little girl, and comfort her?"

She slid down on her knees by the bedside. "I wish I could go to confession, as he does," she thought. "It is like *Christian's Burden*,—I can't be happy till I get rid of it!" She drew a long, long sigh.

Then her head sank against the bed. "After confession you have to do penance," she remembered. "You have to make reparation for your fault as far as you can. I shall have to beg Genevieve's pardon! I know I shall; I have felt it coming all along!"

She rose wearily and began to undress. "He will come over to explain and I shall not see him," she thought, regretfully, "and that is part of my penance, too. But at

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any rate he will see Genevieve and make his explanation, and she will know that all is right."

This thought cheered her greatly, and by the time she was undressed and bathed and her prayers said, she was quite calm and happy. Then she went to the trunk and drew out from its depths her special treasures and ranged them carefully under her pillow. First came her mother's photograph, then one of her brother and his two little boys, then a small package of letters from her brother and aunts. Each one she kissed affectionately before putting it in its resting place. Next, with a very conscious blush and a guilty look over her shoulder as if to be sure that no one was watching her, she brought out two books. Each one she opened and with a happy little giggle read the inscription — "To Vyéra Kárllovna, in friendly remembrance of Prince Leo Solntsoff."

Pressed between the leaves lay some wild flowers and ferns. These she looked at long and lovingly, then timidly touched her lips to them and, as if alarmed at her own boldness, hastily closed the books and tucked them under her pillow. Last came what seemed to be the most precious treasure of all, a large, neatly folded handkerchief, with initials in Russian characters surmounted by the closed coronet of a prince, embroidered in one corner. This was pressed to her heart and to her cheek, not once but many, many times. "Please, God, bless my Big Friend!" she prayed. Then she lay down to sleep in the company of all her dearest and best.

She was just drowsing off into dreamland when the noise of a creaking door startled her, and she opened her eyes to see Genevieve entering from the adjoining room. With a quiver of dismay and inward rebellion Faith recollected what she had resolved to do.

"We have decided that you may go on the young people's picnic from the Pension in the morning, since I organized

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it, and it will keep you away from undesirable acquaintances for the day, at least," announced Genevieve, in business-like tones. "I shall not go, for the less you and I see of each other the better."

Faith sat up in bed. She swallowed hard, then she held out her hands. "I am very sorry I lost my temper and treated you so badly. Please forgive me," she said, humbly, and she opened out her arms and lifted up her face as if she expected to receive a Prodigal's welcoming kiss.

Genevieve looked surprised for a moment, then she controlled herself and replied frigidly, "I am very glad you realize the outrageousness of your conduct. It is the least you can do to ask my pardon. I forgive you of course, but it will be my duty to punish you just the same. You will know to-morrow night what we have decided. I leave the alarm clock here. It is set for half-past five," and she turned to go back to her room.

Just as she turned, her eye fell upon some colored object protruding from under Faith's pillow. "What is that?" she asked, suspiciously.

For one mad instant Faith wanted to fling herself across the pillow and protect her treasures with her very life's blood. But, instead, she grew quite white and stiffened up very straight. It was like a sharp knife stab to her proud, sensitive soul to have the secrets of her foolish, girlish heart laid bare to unsympathetic eyes. She slid to her feet and stood by the bedside with folded arms and defiant looks, but, oh, such a faint, sinking spirit within!

Genevieve tossed the pillow aside and there lay exposed the sweet treasures of an affectionate, loyal, modest, shrinking maidenhood, walking timidly in the first pale flush of dawning womanhood toward the sunrise gates of life that were slowly opening before it.

Genevieve pounced upon the handkerchief. She saw the

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princely coronet and the Russian initials. "Disgraceful!" she cried. "Bold-faced, shameless girl!" And she tore the handkerchief from end to end, again and again, till nothing was left of it but shreds.

Faith sank upon the floor in a distressful heap. She hardly knew what passed after that, but she was vaguely, dazedly conscious that Genevieve was taking up the books and pulling out the pages with the inscriptions, tearing them in bits and stamping them under foot, together with the dry ferns and flowers within.

"I leave with you the picture of the mother whose memory you have disgraced! You can keep your brother's too, though I blame him and his foreign friends largely for this dreadful state of affairs. But these I take possession of," and the sister gathered up the books and the bundle of letters.

"Not the letters!" cried Faith, springing to her feet. "My letters from my brother, my dear aunts! They are sacred, confidential! You have no right to touch them!"

"Do not be giving me lessons in honor!" sneered Genevieve. "I see well enough that the envelopes are in their handwriting, but how do I know what you have hidden within them?"

Faith drew herself up proudly. "Take them!" she said, quietly. "I give you permission to read every word. You need have no qualms of conscience about it."

Genevieve swept out of the room.

"There's one letter there from Rupert that will give her something to think about," said Faith to herself, grimly. It seemed as if she had no more tears and could suffer no more. She took up her mother's picture and looked long into the dignified, gentle, refined countenance and tender eyes, that seemed to be gazing straight into hers.

"You would have understood!" said Faith, kissing the photograph passionately. "You might have chided me a little for being foolish and sentimental, but you would have

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known there was no shame, no disgrace. You would have laughed a little, and kissed me softly and said, 'You are a good, trustworthy little girl, Faithie, but you must not encourage yourself in silly notions or let yourself care so much for a man who may not want your affection. Remember you are to him only his "Little Comrade." He thinks of you only as a child. Love him truly and loyally as your kind, noble friend, for he deserves it, but remember what is due your own self-respect and maidenly reserve.' 'I will try, Mother dear, and truly I would not have kept his handkerchief had he not first kept my ribbon.' 'I know it, darling! I am only warning you and watching over you for the future. God bless my baby girl!'"

And hugging the picture to her breast, Faith cried herself to sleep.

And thus it was that the following day, at a stupid picnic, with young companions for whom she cared not one straw, the time had passed slowly and wearisomely, a trial to her temper and a severe test of her manners.

During Faith's absence Genevieve Brandon completed her arrangements for the girl's future. She had made the acquaintance of a Lady Bowen, widow of an Englishman of some distinction as a traveler and Persian scholar, and had learned that the lady was returning from the Far East by easy stages, on her way to Leipsic, where she was to superintend the translation into German of some of her husband's works. Lady Bowen was well acquainted with German life and schools, and promised to recommend Faith to an excellent German family with whom she could board at reasonable rates while attending courses at the schools.

"A staunch Lutheran family, I hope," said Genevieve, who never went to church herself. "She has been two months with the Stourdzas, who are Romanists, and has been going to church with them or else to the Greek Orthodox churches with those Russians. I don't know what her

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brother is thinking of. She is pretty well demoralized already. Her sister and I can do little, as we expect to be traveling constantly. It would not be the right kind of life for her at all. I shall be thankful to have her under healthful religious influences."

When everything was decided, Genevieve "consulted" Sophy, who looked a little disappointed to lose Faith's company on their travels, but was quickly and easily convinced of the wisdom of the decision, and was sent into town on some commissions for the girl's journey, while Genevieve settled herself in a sheltered corner of the veranda.

Shortly before noon Solntsoff had passed within a short distance of the Pension on his way to the Naberézhnaya. Genevieve scanned the passing figure attentively.

"He is not exactly a handsome man, but there is something very stunning about him," she mused. "It is in his bearing and expression. He appears to wear his clothes carelessly, but he has lots of style. I don't like fair men, as a rule, and his forehead is too high; but with his hat on he looks particularly well, as he has rather fascinating eyes and a well-cut, aristocratic nose. I don't like his mouth, though; it is set in very obstinate, aggressive lines. Still, it does not show much under his moustache, and he can give a very winning smile when he chooses. I remember that the night we spent here on the way to the Caucasus, I picked him out from a group of men at the hotel, not as the handsomest, but as easily the most distinguished looking."

Here Genevieve started slightly and frowned. "Why did I not think of it then?" she asked herself. "I was not so very keen on that trip to the Caucasus, wonderful as it proved to be. But if I could have foreseen that there would be six or eight weeks of propinquity ——" She stopped, bit her lip and, springing up, began to pace the terrace restlessly. "Fool that I was!" she exclaimed. "All this time wasted! Of course he was only amusing himself with the

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child, and I have gone and quarreled with him over her! I have certainly played my cards badly, but is it too late? We can put off Athens and Corfu for two or three weeks. Sophy will not care. It is a pretty title, and a genuinely old, historic one, they say, going back nine centuries in the direct male line to the old sovereigns of Moscow. Of course I would never live in Russia. I should insist on living somewhere on the continent. Paris or Rome, probably. Russians are fond of travel and very cosmopolitan. Besides, I should control the money, as he has nothing but a beggarly salary. They say he holds a high position at court, which would entitle me to be presented. Is it too late?"

Certainly she had made a bad beginning. She must devise some way to rectify this false start. She would call at the villa this very evening and see what could be done to clear up the situation.

At the Kliázemski villa an uncomfortable evening followed an uncomfortable day. The old prince's rheumatism was aggravated by the heat and the succeeding storm. He played his usual game of chess with his nephew, but both men's tempers were on edge and it was with difficulty that they preserved the peace. Then Solntsoff, seeing that the worst of the storm was over, determined to walk off his ill-humor and afterward drop in at the Stourdzas, for consultation. He went to his room for a raincoat and, passing the drawing-room on his return heard a woman's voice within. Standing on the threshold, hat in hand, he glanced in and saw the flaxen head and Madonna-like face and form of Genevieve Brandon conversing most amicably with his uncle and sister.

Genevieve started, rose, and came forward, hesitatingly, gracefully, with extended hand.

"Prince Solntsoff, I owe you an explanation, perhaps you will think — an apology. But, when you know all, you will realize how exceedingly difficult and delicate my

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position has been, and that in my inexperience I believed myself to be acting for the best. If I have been mistaken, I sincerely beg your pardon."

The prince bowed courteously over the extended hand, which he did not touch, and placed a chair for her. Then he seated himself beside his uncle's sofa. He would commit himself by no remark till she had made her explanation.

"It is such a delicate subject I hardly know how to begin," she said, lifting her large, pale-blue eyes appealingly, then letting them fall modestly under the shelter of their long, flaxen lashes. After a moment's hesitation, she turned to the older prince. "Let me, rather, speak to you, sir, as to a father."

"Spare yourself, my dear young lady," suggested the older nobleman. "It must indeed be hard for you to confide in strangers."

"Perhaps there is not the necessity for explanation that you think," added Countess Chernyatina.

"No necessity, perhaps from one point of view," said Genevieve, with sad eyes and tremulous voice, "but the most pressing necessity from another. I do not misunderstand Prince Solntsoff's position. He is a gentleman. He takes a purely friendly interest in an intelligent young school-girl, whom he looks upon as a mere child, and shows her great kindness — a kindness which no woman of experience would misinterpret. But Faith is not experienced. She is at the most romantic and impulsive period of youth, with ill-regulated imagination and excitable, ungoverned temperament. And the terrible part of it is — for this she is not responsible!" and here Genevieve covered her face with her hands, stifling a sob.

Countess Chernyatina gave a murmur of sympathy. The two men glanced at each other, but neither spoke.

Recovering herself, Genevieve continued, "Young as I am for such burdens, I have had to take a mother's place

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to this unhappy child for nearly three years, and I have guarded her secret at every sacrifice. I have been misunderstood, misjudged, but I cared not. For her sake silence has been best, till now. But, —Faith must never marry!”

An uncomfortable pause ensued. After waiting in vain for some exclamation, some question to help her out, Genevieve pressed her handkerchief to her eyes and went on.

“I did not permit you to justify yourself last evening, Prince, because I thought it best that Faith should be left to think ill of you, if it would have the effect of turning her thoughts from you. I believed it might be best for you yourself that the friendship should be broken off before she reached womanhood. It is such a sad story. My father, soon after his second marriage, found himself obliged to break up our beautiful home and take Faith’s mother away. His life was one long martyrdom to her melancholia. You will remember, Prince Kliázemski, that Minister Ludlow died a very sudden death, which never was explained. That his mind had been affected for some time before was evident from the confusion in which he left his affairs. Both his living daughters are great sufferers from nervousness and depression. They live in great seclusion and their eccentricities are only too well known. Faith was rescued from this unhappy household three years ago, and my sister and I have devoted ourselves to trying to build up a healthy brain and body, hoping she might have inherited the Brandon constitution, which is absolutely without taint. But, alas! she is all Ludlow!” Here Genevieve broke down altogether.

“Forgive me!” she cried, after a moment. “I do not appeal to your sympathy for myself, though my position is a hard one. With her father absent, her brother dreading the same inheritance, and antagonistic to me because I know his secret fears, it leaves me no one to turn to. I only beg consideration for this poor child whom I am trying to guard,

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whose heart-breaking premonitory symptoms I am struggling to conceal."

She rose and extended both hands toward her listeners. "There is only one way to befriend me and my unhappy little sister. As men of heart, of delicacy, of honor, you will, I know, keep my confidence sacred."

"It shall, indeed, be sacredly kept," said the old man gravely.

"I shall not trouble you longer with my sorrows and my fears," she said, sighing deeply, "but," turning to Solntsoff, "if there is anything further you care to learn about the child to whom you have been so kind, I shall always be at home to you in the future, for I believe you will be, in the truest sense, our friend."

She pressed the countess' hand with a murmured appeal for sympathy, she shook hands with the old prince with deep reverence. She would have shaken hands with Solntsoff also, but he had stepped forward to open the outer door for her and stood there courteously, holding the door with one hand and his hat with the other. She lifted dewy, pleading eyes to his.

"You, most of all, will keep my confidence?" she entreated.

"It shall be exactly as if you had not spoken," replied the prince, quietly, with deliberate meaning.

When Solntsoff returned to the sitting-room, his blue eyes had a cold, steely glitter and his mouth was set in the obstinate, aggressive lines which Genevieve found so ugly.

The old prince had lost the kindly, courteous demeanor which he had maintained during the interview. He was flushed and stiff, and his faded eyes fairly snapped.

"I don't believe one word of it!" he growled.

"The woman was lying, that was plain enough," said Solntsoff, coolly. "God only knows with what object."

"Jealousy," said his sister, shortly.

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"For heaven's sake!" he scoffed. "I am not a man that women lose their heads over."

"The more fools they!" grumbled his uncle.

"You would be more generally popular with the ladies, Lyóva," observed the countess, "if you did not treat all women like enemies. If you ever seemed to care for their society, if you ever glanced pleasantly and invitingly at them, as other men do, they would respond quickly enough."

The hard lines about the young man's mouth melted into a smile. Certainly he had "glanced pleasantly and invitingly" at Vyéra Kárllovna, and she had not failed to respond!

"However," continued his sister, "I mean a different kind of jealousy. She is no more in love with you than you are with her; but she is nearly thirty years old and still unmarried, and she finds it hard to bear that her little step-sister, at sixteen, should capture a man of rank and distinction, and of an age more suitable to herself. She is trying to frighten you from marrying the sister and, at the same time, appeal to your sympathy on her own behalf."

"I saw Minister Ludlow three weeks before his death, and he was as sound in mind as you or I. He died of heart failure from overstudy and worry over bringing out his great work on Ancient Republics. He was a man of honor and intellect. The ladies of his family were of exquisite breeding and culture. It was good stock," said the old prince. "But, Lyóva," he added cautiously, "though the woman is lying or, at least, grossly exaggerating, still it is your duty to investigate. It is not a question of Vyéra alone, for you would gladly cherish her in sickness and in health, but it is the responsibility for those that come after."

"If there is no taint on the father's side, and you know there is none in me, the danger of inheritance should be halved for the children," said Solntsoff, thoughtfully, reddening a little as he spoke of himself in this relation. "As for Vyéra

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Kárllovna, I have studied her at close range for six weeks, day in and day out, three times a day, and if she has incipient insanity then it would be well for us if we were all a little insane. But, at the worst, she stands as good a chance to escape as Milbanke, who is thirty-six and has developed nothing yet."

"Except," put in his sister, slyly, "an antagonism to Miss Brandon!"

"The best proof of his absolute sanity," retorted the brother, with a grim smile.

Bidding them an affectionate good-night and, after the beautiful patriarchal custom of Russian family life, kneeling to receive the old man's blessing, Solntsoff started for the hotel. But the ill luck of the last twenty-four hours still pursued him. The Stourdzas had gone out for the evening, the Alyónkins had left Yalta that morning, and who was there to whom he could turn at this juncture?

CHAPTER VIII

THE COMING OF LANCELOT

"A bow-shot from her bower-eaves
He rode between the barley sheaves —
'Tirra-lirra' — by the river,
Sang Sir Lancelot."

— *Tennyson.*

FOR Faith, also, this miserable day had been crowned by misfortune. On her return from the heat and fatigue of the excursion she had been caught in the drenching storm. Going to her room to change her clothes she found there her sister Sophy busily packing the boxes.

"Why, what are you doing, Sophy?" exclaimed Faith. "Why are you packing for me? Are we, — we are not going away!"

"Genevieve has left a note to explain. She has gone to a bridge-party at the Casino."

Faith opened it with a sinking heart.

"We have decided (wrote Genevieve) that you must resume your studies without further loss of time, and have secured a comfortable home for you where desirable arrangements can be made for your lessons. You will leave with Lady Bowen early to-morrow morning."

"To-morrow!" exclaimed Faith. Her breath seemed to leave her and she sat down rather suddenly on the nearest chair.

"You will pack this evening (continued the note) and go to bed as early as possible. I shall see the Stourdzas to-night at the Casino and will explain to them about your sudden departure. I have also said good-bye for you at the

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Kliázemski villa, as I did not wish you to go there again, so there will be nothing for you to do but pack and get a good night's rest. You will be wakened at six o'clock. Lady Bowen will tell you, after you start, what your destination is."

It seemed to Faith as if she were choking. She rose and went to the window for air. It was still raining, but not so heavily.

Sophy glanced up sympathetically. No doubt Genevieve was right, but it was a little hard on Faith and the child looked very pale.

"Faith, dear, you have had a hot, tiring day. It is cooler now after the rain. You had better go out and get a little fresh air. I will finish your packing for you."

Faith was touched, for though Sophy was kind she was completely under Genevieve's thumb and seldom ventured to give her little sister any privileges. Even now she looked a bit startled by her own audacity. Faith thanked her and kissed her affectionately, but said hesitatingly that she would just sit quietly by the window. "I think possibly Prince Solntsoff may come over to call on us," she explained, emboldened to frankness by Sophy's goodness.

Sophy almost trembled at what she was about to do. "Didn't Genevieve tell you that he came over last evening and that she dismissed him?"

"He came!" gasped Faith, "and she dismissed him! What do you mean?"

"She thought it best, dear. We don't know much about him, really, and she felt she had to tell him that he could not be allowed to see you, and that she could not receive any messages for you. She says he looked very stiff and haughty, and left without a word."

"She dismissed him?" repeated Faith, tremulously. "Oh, Sophy!"

"You need the fresh air, dear. If you would like to run over toward the hotel to — er — to bid some of your friends

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good-bye, it will do you good. Only, come home early! Genevieve wouldn't like to find you up. And — er — I will explain all to her — you needn't say anything or wait up to bid her good-night. I don't think she expects it."

Faith was only too glad to accept the good-natured Sophy's proposition. She felt stupefied and crushed. So he had come over last evening, just as she had thought he would do when Alyósha told him his little story. He had come, and he had been dismissed, without being allowed to explain or to send her the least little message! He would think they believed the worst of him, he would never return to be insulted a second time, and she had been forbidden to go to their *dacha*. She would never see him again! The Stourdzas were not at home, there was no one who could speak to him for her, and to-morrow she must leave at daybreak for an unknown destination. The end of all had come!

She started sadly down the avenue and crossed the road into the grounds of the Hotel Miramar. The hotel parlors were brilliantly lighted. She would find every one within doors this stormy night.

No, not every one! In the dimness of the lower, unlighted veranda she could make out a tall form in a long raincoat, his soft felt hat pulled well down over his eyes, pacing back and forth, back and forth the short covered corridor with quick, restless steps. The well-known figure had none of its wonted quiet, poise and grace. There was a jerkiness in his movements, a haste and inequality in the steps that betokened a perturbed frame of mind. Faith's heart beat wildly. How she longed to comfort him!

"I can't bear to see him like that," she said, with a half-sob. "I can't bear not to go to him in his trouble! It — it hurts me to see him suffer! But how can I help or comfort him, how can I be of any earthly use to him? Unless," she added, hesitatingly, "he is perhaps hurt because of Genevieve's dismissal. Does he feel badly for fear we do

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not trust him? Could it be that? Perhaps I ought to let him know his Little Comrade had nothing to do with it. Isn't that what Sophy meant in letting me come over?"

In an instant she was running through the shadowy path, the heavy raindrops plashing down upon her from the lightly quivering leaves. She entered the side door of the hotel, passed down the stairway to the lower floor, pushed open the door into the covered corridor, and stood outside in the semi-darkness where the tall figure was restlessly pacing.

He turned abruptly and stopped short in his tramp. Then he fetched a long sigh of relief. All at once he had grown quite composed and cheerful.

But Faith was full of sudden alarms. It was a very bold thing she had done to seek him out thus alone, at this hour. Perhaps his trouble had nothing to do with her. Perhaps he would not like her having come.

"I am afraid you are disturbed about something. I don't wish to interrupt," she stammered apologetically, "but I came to say that I did not know till five minutes ago that you had called last evening."

"I was sure they did not tell you," he replied quietly. "I know you would wish to be just to me, to give me a chance to explain. But by this time you have heard my explanation from Stourdza, no doubt."

"I have heard nothing. I have not seen the baron," she said, raising her eyes to his, "but I was so sure there was a good explanation that I did not need to hear it from him or from any one else. That is what I have come to tell you."

"Vyéra, Little Comrade!" he cried, taking her hands in his and pressing them to his breast, "you make me very, very happy!" And truly he looked happy, though his eyes were moist with feeling. Lacking though she was in self-confidence Faith could not but see that her childish,

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spontaneous trust had brought this man a very great joy. It seemed wonderful to her that it should be so, but there could be no doubt at all of his emotion.

"You do not interrupt me, Little Comrade," he said. "On the contrary, your coming has taken away my trouble. I have been praying God for a chance to speak to you. I was half beside myself! Of course I should have managed to reach you somehow, somewhere, at some time; but I feared that in the meanwhile they might have poisoned your young mind against me, that you might be sorrowful and embittered, and your trust in me shaken beyond repair. Thank God, it was not so, and you are here! Do you wonder that your faith is sweet to me, Vyéra, Little Comrade?"

He led her to a bench, made her sit down and seated himself beside her. "You have trusted me enough to come, — now you will trust me enough to stay a few minutes, will you not?" he asked. "The door is open, we are in full sight of all who care to look, so you are well matronized! You yourself need no explanation from me, yet to meet the criticism of others it is well you should know the facts, which your brother can easily verify. The truth is," he went on, in a lighter, gayer tone, "my young, well-dressed friend that Alyósha grieved to find was not his aunt, is considerably over sixty years of age and the mother of two sons older than myself. Dear Mrs. Palmgren was my mother's governess, and has always remained the true, beloved friend of my sister and myself. I have my modest bachelor quarters at St. Petersburg in her house on the Fontanka, in an independent apartment on the rez-de-chaussée. Her unmarried son lives with her on the upper floor, and she presides over the establishment in an eminently respectable manner. But Alyósha's ideas of age are vague, and he stretched his imagination as far as he dared in placing her years at 'going-on thirty,' which he regards as the acme of decrepitude."

Faith laughed merrily.

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"Little Comrade, why did you trust me?" he asked, bending toward her tenderly. "You little inexperienced girl, why do you trust any one in this big, bad world, and why, in particular, this big Russian bear, of whom you know so little, so absurdly little? You are really not reasonable to do so!"

"Oh, I have three reasons and they are all good ones," she replied, with great seriousness. "In the first place I trust you instinctively. In the second place I have heard older, wiser persons than I, speak of you as a man of principle and high character. Thirdly, you believe in and practise your religion, therefore you would not deliberately lead other than a good life."

"At least, I do not lead a bad one," he assented, folding his arms and gazing straight out before him into the half-darkness. The lights of the neighboring *dachas* twinkled through the mist, the raindrops plashed heavily from the leafy trees. Faint sounds of gayety reached their ears from the house within.

"I am not good by nature," he said at last, in a low voice, as if communing with himself. "My principles, my purposes in life are good and I am striving for high ideals. But my natural disposition is about as ugly a one as any man was ever called upon to struggle against."

Faith made a faint exclamation of incredulity. But he continued, merely turning slightly toward her.

"You only know me at my best, Little Comrade. As I told you, at the very beginning of our friendship, you must not falsely idealize your friends. You must expect them to have defects; you must be prepared to be patient with their failings. You are not acquainted with mine yet, because you see me only in favorable surroundings, because you yourself draw out what is best in me. I lo — er — like you so much, and your companionship is so precious to me and gives me so much happiness, that it is easy for me to be nice

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to you as I meet you here. But if you were with me day by day and caught me off my guard, as it were, you would soon find that you had a man of jealous, disagreeable temper to deal with. But," he added, gravely, "mine would have to be a far worse nature than it is could I lead aught but a clean and honorable life, for by the mercy of God I was brought up by the best, the noblest of parents and teachers. They inspired us with a positive enthusiasm for what is right and holy, and a hearty contempt for all that is low and evil. No, I have not led a bad life, but I can claim scant credit for this. My many and great faults of character are all my own, but my virtues I owe, under God, to my parents."

He remained silent again for a while, still gazing out into the darkness and mist before him. His voice was slightly tremulous when he resumed.

"I lost them both before my seventeenth year; but it seemed as if their death had only served to give their counsels to me new force and a new sacredness. In hours of temptation and of struggle, or, what is worse, of a weakness that would fain give up the struggle, — in such hours the memory of their words has come to me as vividly as if newly spoken. How can I but believe in the Communion of Saints when I have felt their loving spirits watching over me at the most critical moments of my life? I was not quite fourteen years old when my mother died, sixteen years ago; but there are times when it has seemed to me as if her living voice were speaking to me in words of counsel, or comfort, or warning, so near has her beloved spirit been to mine in its hours of need!"

He buried his face in his hands. There was a long pause.

Faith, sitting by his side, felt as if her childhood had passed from her and that she had in a few moments grown into the full stature of womanhood. This man, this noble, Christian gentleman, was letting her look into the depth of

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his man's soul, with its weakness and its strength, with its sorrows, its temptations, its deepest human affections, its holiest spiritual experiences. Never could she be quite the child she was before he thus entrusted her with the secrets of his soul. She knew instinctively that he was not one who weakly sought for sympathy, or who gave his confidence easily. She understood that the one to whom he thus bared his heart was a trusted and beloved friend.

She longed to speak words of comfort and of comprehension, but she knew not how. Had he been brother, or father, or cousin, she could have slipped her hand into his; she could have murmured words of constant affection and endearing sympathy. But because he was the dearest of all, because he was the one friend above a thousand, she must sit mutely and decorously by, or utter phrases of merest commonplace. He could not know how her young heart was throbbing with suppressed emotion and compassion.

"I know a little of how you feel," she ventured to say at last, sympathetically. "I, too, lost my mother when I was about thirteen; and though we were separated so much during her life, yet she still seems my mother, and I talk to her picture almost as if I were talking to her. Only last night, when I was in great trouble, it seemed as if I could hear her answering me."

"You were in great trouble last night, Vyéra?" he asked, raising his head and looking at her attentively. "Poor little, motherless child! Tell me about your trouble."

Now, how could she tell him about it? He was her good friend and she could tell him many things, but certainly not all that had passed between herself and Genevieve. Still, she ought to let him know something of her faults, since he had not concealed his own from her.

"I behaved like a little demon to my sister," she stammered, at length. "I flew into a rage, and I — shook her — with all my might!"

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The prince's eyes opened wide in amazement; he stared at her incredulously, till Faith, very red and shamefaced, knew not where to look. Then suddenly, to her utter surprise, he threw back his head and burst into peal upon peal of laughter. Then he leaned forward and laughed long and heartily till he nearly choked. At last he controlled himself and straightened up, wiped his eyes, smoothed his moustache and turned toward her most indulgently and good-humoredly.

"That was very reprehensible, Vyéra Kárllovna!" he remarked. "But you know that you and I are akin in our failings. We discovered this the very first time that we talked together. I, too, was in a rage with your sister last evening. I did not shake her, but I should have liked to do so. I stormed about the hillside here, with murder in my heart, for above an hour, and hardly closed my eyes all night. As for the things I felt and said this day, it is best you should not know them. But, tell me! What was it roused the anger of my gentle Little Comrade?"

"I am not gentle," said Faith. "You do not know my faults any more than I know yours. You only think me gentle because you have been so kind that I have had no temptation to be otherwise."

"You do not frighten me in the least," he retorted smilingly, squaring his sturdy shoulders. "You see it would not be easy for you to shake *me!* But you would not be angry without a cause. Are you not going to tell me what enraged you?"

Well, no! Faith could not tell. She shook her head and looked up rather appealingly at him.

"I have forgotten to mention," remarked the prince, "that late last evening two books which I had once given you were sent to my room, together with a few words, written in the third person, to the effect that Miss F. Brandon

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returned them with thanks and would accept no presents from Prince Solntsoff."

"Oh!" exclaimed Faith. "I hope you did not think it was I!"

"I knew you had no hand in it," he replied with conviction. He looked down at her with a tender, sidelong glance. "You and I have a good deal of confidence in each other, Vyéra," he observed.

"So it would seem," agreed Faith.

"And very wisely and reasonably so," he continued. "We lo — I mean, like each other with our heads as well as our hearts, like sensible, Christian friends. Was there anything else she deprived you of?"

The suddenness of the question took Faith's breath away. When he looked at her with that bright, steady glance in his keen blue eyes, she felt that they penetrated her inmost consciousness and made concealment impossible.

"Oh, one other thing," she said, with an attempt at easy indifference. "Perhaps you remember once binding my ankle with your handkerchief? Well, I had forgotten — that is — er — neglected to return it to you, and she found it and, — well, — put an effectual end to its career as a handkerchief!"

"I am afraid, Vyéra," said the prince, gravely, "that you do not take as good care of my things as I do of yours."

"Girls do not have vest pockets," observed Faith, demurely.

Solntsoff started slightly, grew a little red, then the corners of his mouth twitched. "I must get even with Stourdza for that," he thought. "I am glad," he remarked aloud, "that I happened to have forgotten, er — that is — neglected, to restore your ribbon. Of course, it is of no practical use to me as a ribbon, but I shall keep it in compensation for the unjust destruction of my property."

"But there is no compensation for me," said Faith, dole-

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fully. "What am I to remember you by when they send me away to-morrow?" and she burst into sudden tears.

He had done his best to keep his distance, to be self-restrained and merely friendly, but the sight of her tears was almost too much for him. It seemed as if he must seize her in his arms and clasp her to his breast and give her, then and there, her first lover's kiss. Father Spiridion had said truly that this innocent affection was something to be cherished and jealously guarded with all his manly strength. He had turned impulsively and thrown out his arms toward her, when he suddenly recoiled. He had promised not to commit her to an engagement, and he well knew that, to a girl like Faith, a kiss would have all the sacredness of betrothal. Nothing in his whole life of self-restraint had seemed harder to him than renouncing the sweet caress that might so easily have been his.

He sprang up and walked rapidly back and forth half a dozen times. It was so sweet to be loved with that innocent, fervent, loyal affection! She was so dear and so true! And he, who had seen so much of the falsehood, the hollowness, the heartlessness and vice of the great-world, how he prized this innocence and truth! He had found a field with a treasure therein, and he would sell all he had to buy that field and call this treasure his own!

At last he stopped, and stood still before her.

"Faith, you make it very hard for me. Please try, for my sake, to stop crying."

The appeal had the instant effect that he had foreseen. She controlled herself at once, stood up bravely, wiped her eyes and did her best to smile.

"Excuse me!" she begged. "I am so selfish! I was thinking only of my own trouble. I did not know it would be hard for you, too."

"But from now on you must remember that everything which concerns you affects your Big Friend's happiness also,"

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said the prince, with great decision. "However, we must not be too angry with your sister," he added. "From her point of view she is entirely right in withdrawing you from the society of a man she believes to be unprincipled, and in demanding something more than his own unsupported assertions of rectitude. I have a plain duty toward both you and your family. I must prove to their satisfaction that I am not unworthy of your further friendship. I shall communicate with your brother and ask him to make all fitting inquiries about my character and position, to determine if I am a proper person to be allowed to visit and correspond with you."

"Correspond?" cried Faith, joyfully. "Oh, shall I hear from you? I am so glad you want to correspond with me! I was afraid you would forget all about the little girl you were once so kind to, and that after you returned to St. Petersburg I might never see or hear from you again!"

"I never thought of that possibility," he remarked, dryly. "I have tormented myself for fear you might forget your childish, passing fancy for an older man who had interested himself in you, and that you might meet younger, more attractive men who would make you wonder that you could ever have cared for the big Polar bear! But never did the possibility that I could forget my Little Comrade enter my mind. You see," he added, "I am so much older, so much more settled in my ways and feelings, that if I, at my age, form an attachment, I am not as likely to get over it as you are at your age."

"I shall not get over it," said Faith, confidently.

"But," continued the prince, "I must not take advantage of your sweet faith in me, when my character has been called in question by one who knows more of life and the world than you. Thank God, I am not unworthy of your trust, still you might easily be deceived in me. It is right that you should have the judgment of others to rely on,

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that is, as far as my character goes. Your brother, I think, will kindly vouch for me. As for possible prejudice against my country and my religion, those are questions of personal taste and individual conscience which you have a perfect right to decide for yourself. No one, not even a father, can assume the responsibility for your soul's salvation or your heart's desire. So, you see, if I can satisfy him about my character, the rest will depend upon you."

Faith looked puzzled. "What will depend upon me?" she asked, timidly.

He started a little and smiled. "To be sure," he said, pleasantly, "I am putting the cart before the horse! It is all so plain to me that I forgot you would not know what I was driving at! You see, Vyéra, you are very young, and there is much for you to consider — more than most women have to consider or most men to ask; but," very tenderly, "I want you to be thinking while we are separated from one another, whether, when you grow up, you can some day care enough for this Big Friend to give up your country for his, whether you can learn to love the Orthodox faith that he loves, to worship as he worships, to become one of his people, and the dearest comrade of his whole life? You will think over it for my sake, will you not, since it is the wish of my heart?"

He looked searchingly into her averted face. He could make out that she was very pale and grave; but her head drooped low and she threw the back of her hand across her eyes with a childish gesture.

"Vyérochka, little dove! Have I frightened you?" he asked in great anxiety. "Has the big man been too serious?"

"No, no," she whispered at last, looking up with timid, but adoring eyes. How wonderful, how beautiful it was that he should care for her in this way! Yet how could she ever fulfil his expectations or live up to his ideals?

"But," she said, hesitatingly, "I am so afraid I may dis-

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appoint you! I may turn out quite different from what you expect when I grow up. Of course I am very, very happy that you like me ——”

“I should think,” he interrupted, “that in this case it would be perfectly correct English to say ‘love’ instead of ‘like’.”

She smiled shyly and raised her head a little. “I haven’t much self-confidence,” she apologized. “I shall be so afraid it is all a mistake that it will be hard to convince me that you really want me. I am afraid that when you see me grown up you will be disappointed in me, and yet you will not wish to tell me so for fear of hurting my feelings. I could not be happy, then.”

“Neither could I be happy if you accepted me from pity,” he said, decidedly. “Faith, Little Comrade, let us leave it this way for the present. We will simply both be thinking over it till you are old enough to decide for yourself. Then, when the time comes, we will talk it over like true friends who must consider their duty to themselves, to each other, and to God. We will pledge each other to speak the absolute truth, even if it hurts a little, having confidence in each other’s good sense, courage and self-respect. Will this understanding be satisfactory?”

“Oh, yes—er — quite satisfactory, thank you,” whispered Faith.

All at once she started guiltily and grew pale. “Oh, I must go home,” she cried, nervously. “I hear horses in the distance; it must be my sister’s carriage. I ought to have been in bed long ago. What will Genevieve say?”

“She may go to the devil!” muttered the prince inwardly. All the scrupulous delicacy and conventional prudence of his conduct suddenly seemed to him the veriest nonsense in face of the reality of resigning Faith to the tender mercies of her stepsister. Good God! Why must she be submitted to that?

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"We will face the music together," he said aloud, offering her his arm, which she accepted with a little flutter of hesitation. It was so nice to walk beside him, with her hand securely sheltered within his strong arm, so nice that it seemed almost as if it must be wrong!

Nearer and nearer came the hoof beats. It was not a carriage they had heard, but a saddle-horse coming slowly up the hill. Solntsoff shrugged his shoulders. Commonsense and conventionality resumed their sway, and visions of defiance and elopement faded away. After all, he was pursuing the right and manly course.

"There is one promise I wish you to make me," added the prince, very earnestly. "Faith, Little Comrade, it is possible that they may some day try to make you think that it is your duty to sacrifice your happiness to my good, or the good of others. Yet this might be a very false idea, which would only wreck both our lives, and for no purpose. Promise me, that if any such doubts or scruples should arise you will confide them in me, and let me help you to decide."

"Why, certainly!" said Faith, surprised. "That would be the only fair way to do. You are the best judge of what is for your own good."

"Sensible girl!" he said approvingly, and in secret he gave a sigh of relief. Faith was as true as steel, but she was scrupulous and timid, and capable of utter self-abnegation for those she loved. He had dreaded lest her sister should work on her pathetic conscientiousness to make her give up the idea of marriage on account of her possible inheritance; but since she saw so clearly the justice of consulting with him before making any sacrifice his mind was at ease.

"And remember, Little Comrade," he added, "that you are free, absolutely free! Even to fall in love with some other

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fellow when you grow up, if the fancy seizes you," and he laughed, jestingly.

Faith shook her head, confidently. "No one shall ever come between us!" she declared.

* * * * *

Through the gray mist that enveloped the hillside the sound of the regular fall of a horse's hoofs came nearer and nearer upon the flinty road. Keeping time with the hoof-beats they could hear the tones of a rich, manly voice singing with mellow and cultivated art an air of haunting melody, of rhythmic, lilting melody, wild, strange and lovely, full of irresistible swing and fire, yet with an underlying pathos that pierced to the very soul.

"Listen!" whispered Faith, looking inquiringly up at her companion.

"It is the Kozák lover's war song," he whispered in reply. "It tells of the wounded Kozák returning from victory to find his sweetheart true, but his mother dead. It is a song of triumph and pain, of love and prayer!"

From the cloud of mist a horseman rode into the semi-obscurity of the path in front of them. He was in uniform, his officer's cloak hanging loosely about him, the visor of his *fourázsh* shading his eyes. His song ceased and he roused himself from his careless, dreamy attitude. He could dimly discern two figures, a man and a girl, standing together under the shadow of the moisture-laden trees by the gate. Doubtless a soldier-lover and his lass!

"*Zdoróvo, Rebyáta!* Good cheer, my children!" he called out, in the hearty, jovial greeting of the Russian officer to his men, lifting his cap and bending his head courteously nearly to the saddle-bow. For a woman is a woman, though she be but a soldier-lad's sweetheart, and the soldier-lad, himself, is a man and a brother before great Mother Nature. Then, touching spurs to his horse, he

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cantered along the road to the stables at the rear of the hotel.

Faith could catch only the merest glimpse of a gallant, picturesque, soldierly figure.

"*Geörgiy Pobyedonósets*, St. George the Victorious!" muttered the prince, and he frowned.

CHAPTER IX

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"I cannot lose thee for a day,
But, like a bird with restless wing,
My heart will find thee far away
And on thy bosom fall and sing
'My nest is here! My rest is here!'
And in the lull of storm and rain
Fresh voices make a sweet refrain,
'His rest is there! His nest is there!'"

— *Meredith.*

THE Right Reverend Wilfred Ludlow, Bishop of Wroster, had recently passed through an ordeal such as tries the souls of bishops, a conflict in the Episcopal Convention in which all his pet measures, such as the change of name from "The Protestant Episcopal Church of America" to "The American Catholic Church," reunion with the Greek Orthodox churches of the Orient, the recognition in the Prayer Book of other sacraments beside the "two, generally necessary to salvation," and the compiling of a ritual for the anointing of the sick, had been crushingly defeated or ignominiously relegated to committees. The whole convention, the good bishop felt, had been a defeat for what he termed "Catholic" principles, and a sweeping victory for the most pronouncedly Protestant element in the Church. His summer trip to Greece and Constantinople, which he had hoped would advance the cause of church union, had been another source of annoyance. He had met scant encouragement from the local Orthodox synods, who took no interest in Corporate Reunion, were suspicious of Occidental methods and doubtful of Anglican Orders. The obstinate conservatism, the ignorance and

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prejudice of the Greek Orthodox ecclesiastics were most irritating to one who had the Catholic interests of the Church so much at heart as our good bishop!

Amid all this trouble and despondency had appeared a new cloud upon the horizon. A letter from Miss Brandon notified him that his niece, his own sister's child, a mere baby, had become infatuated with a foreigner, and of all foreigners, a Russian, a certain Prince Solntsoff, adventurer and libertine; so foolishly and openly infatuated that Miss Brandon was now arranging to hurry the girl away secretly to a boarding school in Germany, where she would be under strict supervision. There was no time to consult Faith's father, now in South Africa, studying the vagaries of a new comet. What was to be done must be done immediately. She had had to assume the entire responsibility and act at once before the girl was compromised.

"This is terrible, terrible!" groaned the bishop. "My only niece, the only little daughter of my favorite sister, and brought up in the Ludlow home! Charles Brandon never did take the slightest responsibility about his child, except to get her away from the safety and shelter of the Ludlow home and let her run wild for two or three years. They are rovers, all those Brandons, and Unitarians to boot. I wish they were all on one of his planets! What possessed me to name my son after the Brandon side of the family?"

Brandon Ludlow had accompanied his father to Athens and Constantinople, where they had visited the bishop's nephew, Rupert Milbanke, while the bishop conferred with the Greek Patriarch. They were now pacing the deck of the Black Sea steamer, as it was sailing from Constantinople to Odessa* on a glorious October afternoon.

"It is a thousand pities about Faithie!" said the clean-

* Pronounced Ahd-yes'-sah.

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shaven, young football hero. "She is the only girl cousin I have, and she was so jolly, precocious and companionable. Though I was four years older I really used to enjoy talking and romping with her at Aunt Ludlows'. To think she is sixteen now, and in love! It seems absurd."

"Absurd? It is criminal!" cried the irritated bishop, with pious exaggeration. "A Russian adventurer and schismatic! With our sturdy Anglo-Saxon ideals it is a most repulsive thought. Miss Brandon is quite right. The child must go back to school. Those foreign friends of Milbanke's that she had been left with were Romanists, it seems. For heaven's sake! What could Rupert have been thinking of? My niece under the influence of Romanists! I wish I had known that before we left Constantinople. I would have taken him to task for it. I am glad I telegraphed Miss Brandon to have the child meet us at Odessa. I shall have the opportunity to correct any false opinions she may have acquired."

"I don't see how she could have chosen anything worse," shuddered young Ludlow. "Of all barbarous and impossible countries!"

"Don't speak of it!" groaned his father. "A niece of mine! The Latin races are bad enough, but at least I have some knowledge of them. With all their moral faults they have intellectual and social gifts, though of course their Romanism puts them out of the question. But the Slavic races I know absolutely nothing about. They are utterly antipathetic to me. International marriages are repugnant from any point of view; but, if she must fall in love with a foreigner, why could she not have lost her heart to some attractive young Englishman, as her mother did? If an American gentleman, with all the word implies, isn't good enough for her, then let her choose one of the same Anglo-Saxon stock, with the religion, the ideals, the culture, the manhood that it represents."

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"But, sir, I don't think we need worry," said the son, consolingly. "Time and separation will make it all right. Faith will forget this man inside of six months."

"I am not so sure," said the bishop, doubtingly. "Women are tenacious, especially when they are opposed. Look at your Aunt Adèle, wearing black to this day for a lover who died thirty-five years ago, and who had jilted her and married another woman three months before he died!"

"But there is Aunt Brandon," suggested young Ludlow. "Faith's own mother could forget her first love and make a second marriage."

"Yes, and a pretty mess she made of it!" growled the departed Mrs. Brandon's brother. "A man who can't see an inch before his nose except when he looks through a telescope, and then sees a lot of things that are not there. Dragging that gifted, cultivated woman off to exile in God-forsaken countries, when she might have been a brilliant ornament to Boston society, and might be alive to-day to look after her own child!"

"I wish there were some American fellows over here that I could introduce to Faithie," said Brandon Ludlow, thoughtfully.

"There's something in that," agreed the bishop, with the air of one considering a desperate remedy. "I don't know anything about match-making, but there are cases where I believe it is a good thing. The truth is, Rupert ought to marry again and give Faith a home, as long as Charles Brandon goes gallivanting about with his mind on every other planet than the one he and his child live on. She would then be introduced to all that is best in English society. But the trouble is, Brandon, that Rupert is not as upset over this affair as we are. He actually seemed to consider it as a possibility! You see, these diplomats come so much in contact with foreigners that they gradually

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lose their natural abhorrence of them. Now, I am Anglo-Saxon to the core. Give me, always and everywhere, the Anglo-Saxon race!"

Just at that moment a party of loud-voiced British tourists of the aggressive, red-faced, John Bull type pushed rudely and noisily by.

The bishop hemmed and hawed, drew himself to his full height, and displayed with fine effect the expanse of black silk vest, straight Roman collar, massive gold cross and chain, the knee breeches, silk stockings and buckled shoes which, when in England, had usually won for him a deferential "My Lord!" But these barbarians jolted him without respect to the cloth, elbowing their way between him and the landscape, shutting out the view and drowning his voice.

"Non-conformists!" gasped the indignant ecclesiastic. "They have no regard for the hierarchy! What are we coming to? Brandon, tell them who I am!"

"Oh, I wouldn't, sir!" said his son, soothingly. "They are, as you say, Non-conformists, undoubtedly. Come this way, sir. You can see the coast better from the other quarter."

The bishop, who had not given a thought to the view for the last half-hour, was now obsessed with a desire to watch it from the particular coign of vantage from which he had been displaced. But he allowed himself to be soothed and led away by his son.

"Look, sir! There are two splendid specimens of the English race! I have had my eye on them for some time. Now, why couldn't Faith meet and fancy something like that?" and Brandon gazed in admiration at two tall figures standing by the railing at a short distance from themselves.

"Yes, yes! Good representatives of the best Anglo-Saxon type," agreed the bishop, nodding approvingly toward the specimens.

"It is wonderful how they carry off their clothes," said the

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envious Brandon. "There is no mistaking the English gentleman. They have such an easy, careless air, as if they gave no thought to what they wore, and yet there isn't a European or even an American, I don't care who his tailor is, who can approach them in style."

"Typical Anglo-Saxon!" repeated the bishop, admiringly. "One is a little dark in coloring, but it is the brown-haired, blue or gray-eyed type of Englishman that has an admixture of old Norman blood. He is an athlete, lean and powerful, very aristocratic, with a touch of the military. Probably in the Coldstream Guards."

"Such clothes!" sighed Brandon. "Simply ripping!"

"The other," mused the bishop, "is less aggressively the Briton, more cosmopolitan, but essentially Anglo-Saxon as distinct from Anglo-Norman. He is typical of the university man, scholar and athlete combined, such as only the English public school and university produce."

"He is not as handsome as the other, by far," objected young Ludlow.

"His bearing is, I think, superior in grace and poise," replied his father. "He is of pure Saxon type, the type of scholar and gentleman, polished perhaps by travel, perhaps by the attrition of public life. The other is more of the conquering Norman blood, energetic, ambitious, in the plenitude of physical vigor. Splendid types, both of them, of the race that rules the modern world."

Half an hour later the bishop sought out his son, who had retired to the smoking room. "I have been having a little chat with our Anglo-Saxon friend," he said. "I find him a most fascinating man, a delightful talker, widely read and a forceful thinker. And under all his cultivation and charm there is evidence of solid principle, right habits of thought and action, and reverence for God and humanity. He made a deep impression on me. He sees many things from just my point of view."

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"I was sure he must have agreed with Dad!" thought the irreverent son.

"If such a young man would only take a fancy to my niece what a difference it would make in Faith's future!" declared the bishop, now thoroughly infected with the match-making germ. "He is going to stop in Odessa. If only they could be brought together somehow!"

"But, sir, we really know nothing about him," objected the younger man.

"I know the essentials," insisted the bishop. "I cannot mistake the gentleman, the Christian, the man of principle, breeding, and intellect. I think he must either be a diplomat or have traveled much, for he has the intonation of one accustomed to foreign languages, and also a certain cosmopolitan breadth and polish rare among the British, but which, when applied to good Anglo-Saxon stock and traditions, produce their best, most gracious development."

Toward sunset they had gathered their belongings and were watching the imposing panorama of the approach to Odessa, the stately granite stairway and terraces, the wide avenues, the superb monuments and public buildings, the handsome embankments and esplanades of the wealthy modern city. The tall, fair Saxon was half-leaning, half-sitting on the steamer rail, his hat off, his wavy, golden-brown hair tossed by the breeze, his strong, spirited, clear-cut profile outlined against the sunset tints of the autumnal sky. The expression of his face at that moment was dreamy and tender, his pose easy and graceful, and he made a poetic, picturesque figure as he lounged there, motionless, reposeful, half in shadow, half in the rosy glow of the short, October twilight.

The Anglo-Norman, erect, soldierly and elegant, stepped aside to avoid the crowd and found himself next to Bishop Ludlow and his son. He bowed with genial courtesy. The bishop made some commonplace remark on the scenery,

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to which the newcomer replied in monosyllables, though cordially enough in manner. At the next remark, however, he took off his hat and bowing very apologetically begged, in exquisite French, to be excused from replying in English, as he had only a reading knowledge of the language and feared that he could not pronounce it intelligibly.

The bishop and his son stared at one another blankly!

"I made the mistake to think you an Englishman," began the bishop in his academic French. Then, with a gesture of despair, he turned to his son. "I am no French scholar. Please explain to this gentleman, Brandon."

"Brandon!" exclaimed the handsome stranger, with a quick glance of inquiry from one to the other. "Permit me to ask if you are related to the family of Mr. Milbanke, the British Chargé d'Affaires at Constantinople?"

"He is my cousin," said Brandon. "Our family name is Ludlow, and his mother and my father were brother and sister."

"Ah, this is a happy chance! We have just been visiting Mr. Milbanke, who told us we should meet his uncle at Odessa, but we thought you had gone by yesterday's boat."

"I was detained by ecclesiastical affairs," said the bishop in his labored French. "I was ignorant that I was to meet friends of my nephew."

The brilliant gray eyes of the handsome stranger were all alight with laughter. With a courteous "Excuse me!" he turned from them and approached the reposeful figure dreaming in the twilight.

The big, shapely Saxon arose at once and returned with his friend to where the two Americans were. His face had grown somewhat pale and grave, but he stood, hat in hand, bowing courteously.

"I feel that I am most fortunate in this unexpected meeting," he said, in his melodious English. Then he waited.

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"You have the advantage of me," said the bishop at last. "May I ask to whom I have the honor of speaking?"

"Oh, pardon!" interrupted the dark-haired man. "I have explained nothing to these gentlemen. You must introduce yourself, my friend."

A half-smile lighted up the strong, fair face of the other.

"I am Prince Solntsoff of St. Petersburg," he said, simply.

Faith's demeanor on the morning of her departure from Yalta had been inexplicable to Genevieve Brandon. Instead of pouting and fretting, as might have been expected, she was composed, amiable, with smiling lips and shining eyes. Genevieve did not let her out of her sight from the moment she rose till the mail-coach had safely started. She piled tasks upon her, yet met with no complaint, no rebellion, but always a sweet, cheerful acquiescence.

"She cannot have had any communication with him," thought the sister. "Sophy says he did not come over last evening, and that Faith could not possibly have left the house without her knowledge. I have questioned the porter and the maids, and they all say there was no note or message left for her. Apparently Solntsoff has given up his little flirtation, just as I thought he would. Not an effort has he made to reach her! Now it remains to be seen if he comes to call after she is safely out of the way."

Poor Sophy! It was a truly painful compromise that she had compounded with her conscience for Faith's sake. But she had done unto another as she would others should do unto her in like circumstances, and what better rule of conduct can one follow than the Golden Rule?

As the mail-coach drove out of the Livádia road, past the summer palace of the Emperor, Faith took her last look at the hills of Yalta, and her young heart was full of gratitude. How different, how sadly different it would be if she were leaving without having had that precious last

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talk with her "Big Friend!" It seemed to her now that even if she never saw him again, even if he were to die, or were to marry somebody else, her life could never be wholly unhappy, since such a man had once esteemed and liked her enough to care to win the right to her friendship, and to think of her as his possible future wife. It gave an added dignity and seriousness to her character.

Lady Bowen was somewhat stiff, stolid and uncommunicative at first; but Faith's polite, attentive manner and cheery, sensible way of meeting all the little annoyances of travel gradually made an impression on that British matron's heart. They had taken the picturesque, inland route from Yalta to Sevastópol, and from thence made a pilgrimage to the famous battlefields of the Crimean War, where Faith further heightened the good impression by her familiarity with the details of the conflict. From Sevastópol they continued by sea to Odessa, where Bishop Ludlow's telegram reached them. Lady Bowen was not averse to breaking the long journey, and the handsome modern town, with its half-million inhabitants, its unrivaled sea view, its splendid promenades and pleasure gardens made an agreeable resting place.

The second day brought Faith a letter from Rupert Milbanke.

'DEAR SIS! (wrote the brother)

"Knyáz Solntsoff has just come over from Yalta to see me. It is a great compliment to you that so fine and clever a man should care to correspond with so young a girl. What on earth he sees in you! Well, never mind his vagaries! There's a queer streak in every genius! I jolly hate to disappoint you both; but, really, you know I am only half of your guardian, the other half (with all due respect to your honored governor) is your blooming stepsister. I wish she was a step-farther! She has got your uncle and spiritual guardian, the bishop, all worked up about you.

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I assured him Solntsoff's morals were as good as my own, but he only looked at me as if he thought there must, then, be a screw loose about mine. If I had seen Solntsoff before seeing the bishop I should have given him my blessing, and told you to go ahead and correspond all you wished. But what with his lordship's holy horror of the Slavic race, and your cousin's rampant Americanism, and your sister's strenuous opposition to one she is pleased to consider a Don Juan, discretion tells me not to antagonize so many by giving you direct encouragement under the present circumstances. Solntsoff is very sensible. He understands the difficulties and acquiesces in my decision, and is quite as anxious as I that you should do everything decorously. However, he is going to try to catch the bishop at Odessa and soften his heart. If his lordship can be got to consent to a correspondence, be sure of your brother's good-will. For the rest the future must take care of itself.

"I am to be sent to Brussels next spring. Aren't you sorry that it isn't St. Petersburg? However, I do not wish you to get too fond of Russia. There are some awfully nice chaps in England! Besides, I need you to help me try and make some kind of a home for us all this next year. I must have my babies. They have been with their grandmother long enough, and poor Amy always wanted you to live with us. I shall have them and you with me, and put some respectable old she-dragon of a duenna in charge of us all. Ah, me!

"Your loving, lonely brother,
"RUPERT."

Faith understood the sigh, and her heart bled for him. She had seen her sister-in-law only once, but she felt that when so sweet and upright a young woman had nestled in a man's heart he would not easily forget her, or care soon to give his boys a second mother.

But now her cup of happiness was full. How she laughed with delight over Brandon's account of her hero's conquest! She had greatly feared her uncle's opposition to Prince Solntsoff's religion, and that her cousin's intense Americanism would prejudice him against her friendship with a for-

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eigner; and lo! all these difficulties were so beautifully, so unexpectedly smoothed away.

For the bishop's first talk with his niece was most encouraging.

"My dear godchild," he said, seriously, with that upward, far-seeing look that came into his eyes when he spoke in his professional capacity, "we may hope that under the Divine guidance, your friendship with this man, which has led to my meeting with him, will help to bring about that reunion of all branches of the Catholic Church which is the object of my life's labors and prayers. Rupert tells me that Prince Solntsoff is in high favor with the authorities of the Russian state church, and I find his attitude most gratifying. He listened with the closest possible attention to my views of corporate reunion through the *via media* of the Anglican Church. I firmly believe it is our mission to work together with him to bring about a better understanding with the Orthodox synods. It is important, therefore, that you should be properly instructed at once on the points that divide us."

"Oh, I am so glad that you feel that way! I am most anxious to be instructed as soon as possible," cried Faith, eagerly, quite misunderstanding the point of view from which the bishop regarded the question. "I care so much, so very much about it, and long to see my way clearer. It seems so strange and useless that there should be anything at all to divide us, when my church is trying to restore the very things that his has always kept."

"I am to meet a number of their bishops and clergy," continued her uncle, who had not paid much attention to the child's interruption. "I have letters from our own hierarchy, and Solntsoff will furnish me with others. We may hope for great results. And you, my dear, must cultivate a true missionary spirit in harmony with the views I shall inculcate in you. I will lay out a course of reading for you this winter."

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"Prince Solntsoff has promised me some books," began Faith.

"Ah, yes — er — but you see, he is only a layman. As a priest and a theologian, I shall know better how to counsel you in the delicate questions that divide us."

Faith thought that Solntsoff would understand the beliefs and practices of his own church better than any outsider, however learned, but out of respect to her uncle did not press the point; and she wondered a little if Russians, whose charm of manner was proverbial, would be flattered at being taken for English. But she discreetly kept such reflections to herself.

"I have now seen several members of the Ludlow family," thought the prince, "and they seem a healthy lot, without the slightest trace of mental aberration, unless it is that bishop with his curious obsessions about the Anglo-Saxon race and the claims of the Anglican Church. I can understand and respect out-and-out Protestants; but these people who, for three centuries, have rejected Catholic doctrines and sacraments and stood upon Protestant principles, and now suddenly expect us to say that they are, and always have been, uninterruptedly, an integral part of the Catholic Church — No! Their logic is quite beyond me. They 'want to eat their cake and have it, too,' apparently."

In the meanwhile the bishop reported to Brandon that Faith had shown a splendid missionary spirit, and that through Solntsoff's ecclesiastical influences and his high connections in court circles they might do a grand work in bringing this great schismatic empire under the yoke of Christ through the pure faith of the Anglican communion.

"How could Miss Brandon have so completely misunderstood so fine and religious a man as Solntsoff?" asked his son.

"I have no patience with that woman," declared the bishop. "She is one of those Unitarians who try one's very soul by their assumption of intellectual superiority. Even

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toward me, the representative of the brainiest of the churches, she puts on a supercilious air as if tolerating a creature of inferior mental endowment. It is enough to make one's blood boil! Great heavens! There are moments when I feel as if ——" but the good man checked himself in time.

Brandon Ludlow had spent the first twenty-four hours after their arrival in seeing the sights of Odessa and its environs.

"There is going to be a '*sauterie*,' I suppose that means a 'hop,' to-night, in the hotel ballroom," he told Faith. "The cadets from the visiting warships are giving it for the younger set; and Solntsoff's friend, who knows all the officials here, has got invitations for us. Have you anything to wear, Faithie?"

"Oh, just the thing!" exclaimed Faith, delightedly. "Dear old Sophy knew I hadn't much, and she tucked one of her evening gowns into my boxes when Genevieve wasn't looking. It isn't a ball gown, but it is dressy enough for a schoolgirl. It is a light-blue *crêpe de chine*."

"I say, Faith, how did you come to take to Solntsoff rather than to that stunning friend of his? He wears such bully clothes and is such an Apollo I should think he would have bowled you over at first sight."

"What friend?" asked Faith, wonderingly. "Lyéff Petróvich never spoke to me of any friend! Oh, it must be that officer who sang so beautifully."

"He has been showing me the city," said Brandon. "He is an awfully jolly chap, full of the 'Old Nick,' but very decent withal, and seemed to take it for granted I was decent, too, and capable of being interested in serious things. Some men, you know — no, you don't know, because you are a girl — but some men always think a young fellow has no idea in his head but to have a regular tear and see all the freaks and the shady side of things. But this one treated me like a — like a ——"

"Like a gentleman," suggested Faith.

"Well, that about sizes it up," admitted Brandon.

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Lady Bowen expressed her willingness to matronize her at the dance, and in fear and trembling Faith tried on Sophy's pretty blue frock. It was last year's style and not elaborately made, but the color became her, the bodice fitted not too badly, and the skirt — oh, joy! — the skirt reached well below her ankles.

"If I only dared do my hair up!" she sighed wistfully. Then she danced gayly into the sitting-room to show herself off to her kind old friend.

"At last I can wear something pretty!" she cried. "Oh, I did look like such a fright in Yalta, with nothing but cheap shoes and last year's hats and made-over frocks! My only comfort is that Knyáz Solntsoff has seen me at my very worst; and if his friendship has survived the shock of my past appearance, it will survive anything."

"Don't worry about your looks," laughed Lady Bowen. "You may be sure he hasn't cared at all what you had on. Men are faithful creatures, my dear! When a manly man once takes a good woman to his heart, it would require a great deal more than ugly clothes to kill his affection."

Then Faith began to have misgivings whether Solntsoff would care for the ball. Odessa had not the aristocratic society of Yalta, for it was wholly a commercial city, with a large German colony, and the dance was for the younger set. But to her relief he accepted.

"Oh, do you care to come? and do you dance?" asked Faith, eagerly.

"Could I be a courtier and not dance, at least to dance attendance?" he replied, amused. "I shall be there to claim the first waltz after ten o'clock, our first waltz together!" he added sentimentally, as he stood looking down at the sweet, girlish figure with tender admiration.

"There!" exclaimed Faith. "Lady Bowen said you wouldn't care, and you do care!"

"No, she is quite right," answered he, "I should not care

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at all, for my own sake. You might be dressed in sack-cloth, and I should be just as content were I alone concerned. But for your own dear sake I am well pleased."

She was proud and happy to tell him of the bishop's unexpected liberality. He sat by her side and held her hand softly clasped in his, and Lady Bowen left them alone together there, for it was the prince's last evening.

"The bishop has been unexpectedly generous to me, too," said Solntsoff. "This separation will not be so hard as we feared, for we may correspond all we like, and I may visit you as often as I am able. He gives his full consent to my suit, and his god-fatherly blessing to the happy lovers."

"Lovers!" echoed Faith, startled and blushing. "Are we truly — lovers?"

"I am most emphatically your lover," he declared. "And you have given me to understand, have you not, that I am safe in letting myself feel very, very happy?"

"Do I really make you feel so very happy?" she asked, almost incredulously.

"You know that you do!" he replied. "You cannot have failed to see it from the very first."

"Yes, I have seen it," she admitted, shyly, "but I cannot understand it."

"Neither do I understand," he said, teasingly, "how such a romantic, visionary, castle-building little school-maiden, with all of her life and the wide world before her, should deliberately take a fancy to a plain, sober, sedate man nearly twice her age, who never did anything heroic, who doesn't wear a uniform, who is not even a sportsman. No, I cannot understand it! What is it in me that attracts you, Faith? What romance do you find about me?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Faith, with enthusiasm, "to me, you are a very romantic figure — a prince, from far-off Russia, with the history and traditions of your ancient family, and all the glamor of your high position at court, your rank, your

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orders, your distinguished connections — oh, to me it all seems the very acme of romance!”

Solntsoff bit his lip and a dark flush suffused his countenance. He had forgotten his title and his high position in the great world of Imperial Russia. It was all such an every-day affair to him that he had not thought of its possible effect on a young mind unaccustomed to rank and court life.

“So,” he remarked after a moment, “it pleases you to think of me as ‘Knyáz Solntsoff,’ living in a palace and called ‘Illustrious Highness,’ and hobnobbing with Imperial and Serene Highnesses and High Excellencies and court-grandeesh?”

“Oh, immensely!” cried Faith, from the fulness of her honest soul.

He turned his face away. A sharp spasm of pain contracted his features. He felt sick at heart. Her hand still nestled in his. In spite of his keen hurt and disappointment he could not let it go.

“Faith, dear child!” he said at last, with an effort to be calm and reasonable. “I fear I have not told you enough about myself and my affairs. It is only right you should know that I am preparing to give up the very things you care for so — so ‘immensely.’ I myself am indifferent to them and had supposed that you, the child of a democracy, would be equally so. Your prince, my poor Cinderella, does not live in a palace. My uncle does, but I have never been willing to receive a single kopéyk from him. He has two married daughters and several grandchildren to inherit his wealth, and I have preferred to live independently on my own small income. This is going to be smaller than ever now, as I intend at the end of next year to give up my post at the Foreign Office and my position at court. The loss of my salary and emoluments will leave me nothing to depend upon but a patrimony of very modest proportions, and what income my pen may bring me.”

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"You are going to resign your position?" faltered Faith, in low, troubled tones.

"Yes. That is one of the things I went to consult Father Spiridion about. I have been coming to feel, year by year and day by day, that I must make my career along other lines. I am not fitted by temperament for diplomacy, and I dislike the life of travel and long absences from home that it entails, especially if I marry. The atmosphere of court life is also oppressive to me. I am sincerely attached to many members of the Imperial family and their interests, and I shall regret severing my connection with them. But I am of too combative and distrustful a nature to get on well with my fellow courtiers. I am a good fighter — with my pen — and I believe I can serve my country's interests better as a publicist than as an office-holder. But to write disinterestedly and impartially of public affairs, I must be independent of any office or any suspicion of self-interest. As a publicist I must associate with men of the same calling, among whom my title and aristocratic connections will be an actual drawback to me. You must think of me then henceforth, apart from rank or wealth or princely environments, not as Knyáz Solntsoff, but as plain Mr. Peterson, or Pierson — a man with no glamor of romance about him, with absolutely nothing to offer you but his unadorned, matter-of-fact personality and the simple home of a professional man of restricted means. I cannot go back now, even for you, Vyéra!"

His head was still turned away from her. He could not bear to see the light die out in her eager eyes; he had not the courage to watch the quiver of disappointment on her lips. He felt her hand slowly withdrawn from his. He grew icy cold and his big frame began to tremble.

All at once two gentle hands crept up about his shoulders. They clasped about his neck and drew his head downward.

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He felt the touch of a tender cheek against his; he heard the murmur of a sweet voice.

"It was only for your sake that I liked to think of you as a prince. For my own sake, I understand and love you better this way, as plain Mr. Lionel Pierson, but my hero! my own hero! more romantic than ever!"

He clasped her stormily in his arms. Her head lay hidden against his breast and she could hear the heavily throbbing heart and the quickly drawn breath. Then she raised her young face with its loving, trusting eyes and tender lips to his, her sweet maidenhood and his clean, upright manhood exchanging their first kiss, a kiss that was to both as a sacred vow of betrothal.

CHAPTER X

"BACKFISCHLY"

"So do I marvel that your tender eyes,
So full of childish love and modesty,
Can guide me safely when, 'neath darkened skies,
Temptation luring, smiling, whispers me—
When Sin, with silent scorn and mockery,
Would blind my eyes to Christ and Calvary."

—*Breen.*

Two men in evening dress paused at the doorway of the ballroom and stood looking in on the pretty scene. One, tall, shapely, well-poised and fair, bowed courteously to Lady Bowen, shook hands with Ludlow, and when his glance fell upon Faith in her pretty crêpe frock, sitting among some young German school-maidens, a tender look of deep content filled his keen blue eyes.

The other man, an inch or two shorter than his companion but yet well above the medium height, was of soldierly bearing and courtly elegance of manner. His brown hair, cut close to his well-formed head, was smooth and glossy, and was brushed in a broad sweep across the white, noble brow. His features were regular, the nose short and finely chiseled, the full curves of the mouth and chin having both beauty and strength. His eyes, large and brilliant, were of darkest gray, heavily fringed with thick, dark lashes. A well-curled moustache completed the distinctly military air of the handsome stranger. The thin lines of two faint scars across his left cheekbone hardly detracted from his beauty, but rather seemed in keeping with his dashing, soldierly grace, lending a suggestion of romance, of a past of duels and dangers and daring deeds.

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In spite of his military bearing he was not in uniform, but wore the severe evening garb of civil life. His cut and fashion of dress was almost aggressively English and he carried a monocle. Raising the monocle to his eye he glanced round the ballroom. Then he dropped it and shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

"Nothing but sucklings!" he remarked. "Bread-and-butter misses, milk-and-water schoolboys and specimens of the German 'Backfisch.'"^{*} He looked bored and turned to leave, but seeing that Solntsoff had no intention of moving he waited courteously for him.

"It makes me feel like a grandfather," he complained. "Nothing here a day over sixteen, an insupportable age, neither fish, flesh nor good red herring!"

"Sixteen," said Solntsoff, slowly, "is an adorable age!"

His friend stared at him. "Do I hear this from the astute Lyéff Petróvich?" he asked. "You are too young, heart's Brother! We do not begin to dote on sixteen till we are sixty. Then, when we are turning from the consolations of this life to prepare for those of the next, we may with propriety babble about the freshness of youth, sweet sixteen, field daisies, the modest violet, the dew on the rose-leaf, the bloom on the peach, etc., etc. H'm! Let me see! Who is the apple-cheeked, saucer-eyed 'Backfisch' in that group of blond German 'Gretchens'? She has 'eyes to catch fish with on a cloudy night,'" and up went the monocle again.

Solntsoff did not answer.

"Aha!" exclaimed the other. For just at that moment Faith had caught sight of the prince, her cheeks crimsoned, her uplifted eyes grew luminous, and one of her sudden, radiant smiles transfigured her young face. She rose shyly, dropped him a conventional little courtesy and resumed her seat among her companions.

^{*}Literally, fish for frying, the German nickname for a young girl.

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"Aha!" said the newcomer, again. Then he added to himself, "She must be young and unsophisticated, indeed, if the staid, prudish Lyéff Petróvich is able to bring a blush to her modest cheek."

"I apologize to you, Brother," he said, aloud. "Sixteen is indeed an adorable age, and evidently, lucky fellow! an adoring one, also. My felicitations! They are quite in order, are they not?"

Lyéff Petróvich hesitated. "I have spoken, as you know, to her brother and uncle; but there is no public betrothal at present, as she is very young, and the father is absent and may make difficulties," he replied, unwillingly.

The other man was immensely amused. It was really too absurd, Solntsoff, the mature, steady, intellectual Solntsoff, and this big-eyed, blushing, long-limbed, apple-cheeked schoolgirl with braided hair! It took the wise fellows to make fools of themselves! What could Lyóva possibly see in that saucer-eyed "Backfisch" to sweep him off his well-planted feet?

"How could there be any difficulties, little Brother?" he exclaimed aloud, heartily. "As steady a fellow as you has nothing to fear. It is we gay sinners that are kept in a flutter when the papas begin to inquire. That is the one moment when you saints have the advantage. Usually it is with us," and he dropped his monocle and twisted his moustache with a maddening air of conscious superiority.

Solntsoff bit his lip. The two men had been school-companions and neighbors in early youth and were still outwardly friendly, each admiring the other's talents and many fine qualities, while each held his friend in secret contempt, the one for vices, the other for virtues, which he did not share.

Both men entered the room and crossed to where Faith sat. She rose somewhat timidly to greet Lyéff Petróvich.

"Vyéra Kárllovna, permit me to present to you the

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earliest friend of my boyhood, Count von Dovsprung. Youri Andrévich,* Miss Faith Brandon!"

And Faith, with her graceful courtesy, with her sweet smile and polite words of greeting, looked up into the brilliant eyes of the handsomest man she had ever seen.

And he, on his side, gazed as if spellbound into the loveliest, most soulful orbs that had ever been raised to meet his from woman's face.

For an instant Dovsprung felt as if some sort of moral earthquake had torn his soul from the security of its foundations of cynicism and self-complacency. The face he stood gazing into, though fine and wholesome, was not beautiful. The tall, straight young figure, though well-proportioned and of noble carriage, lacked style and elegance. The blue frock, though tastefully made and of good material, was ill-fitting and of bygone fashion. The young girl was at that awkward age when she had outgrown the unconscious graces that delight us in childhood, and was still too young to allure as a woman. Yet this man of the great-world, this cosmopolitan hero of high-life felt at once a distinct appeal to long-forgotten, youthful emotions of chivalry and idealism. His fastidious taste acknowledged instantly the charm of an unusual personality revealed in the poetic brow, the starlike eyes, the transfiguring smile, the sweet voice, the high-bred manner, the intelligence, innocence and uprightness that shone in every lineament. It gave him a certain pleasure that his sophisticated heart could fall under the spell of so purely spiritual a charm, that his worldly, cynical nature still retained sufficient idealism to respond to an attraction so superior to that of the usual feminine allurements.

"Youri Andrévich," he told himself, "you are no saint, but you are a man of delicacy and honor, for all that. You have always respected innocence, and if virtue had always

* Pronounced Your'-ee An-dray'-yev-itch, i. e., George, son of Andrew.

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worn so intelligent and attractive an exterior, if feminine charm were always as sincerely ingenuous as in this little ‘Backfisch,’ you could easily be a model man. Why, then, does Providence arrange things so poorly as to apportion such a delicious type of goodness to a soul so secure of salvation as Lyéff Petróvich, instead of employing it as heavenly bait to catch a poor sinner like yourself? It is not a scientific distribution of its spiritual resources!”

But of what passed in his thoughts nothing was to be read in his handsome, impassive countenance. He merely bowed low and asked her to take a turn with him.

Faith, who had never before waltzed with so old and distinguished a partner, was flattered and fluttered. Secretly thankful for the drill Baroness Stourdza had given her in ballroom etiquette, she let the elegant stranger put his arm about her waist and glided off with him into the most delightful waltz she had ever imagined. So light was his hold, so almost imperceptible his guiding touch, so quick her intuitive response that all effort, all idea of physical exercise was banished; and it seemed as if they were simply floating through space in perfect harmony of will and motion. It was a dance to dream of.

Solntsoff, left alone, was sore at heart and disappointed. He had rarely waltzed of late years, though he had been a skilful dancer in his early days at court. He had made an unusual effort in coming to the ballroom this evening, thinking to give his Little Comrade pleasure by having their first waltz together. And now Dovesprung had stepped between them and taken her off from under his very eyes. He was cross and restless.

“I do not at all approve of schoolgirls leading the life of grown people,” he grumbled. “If they dance half the night at balls when they are sixteen, what is left for them when they are older?”

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This was surely unreasonable of the prince, since he himself had encouraged Faith to attend the dance.

At the end of the second turn round the spacious hall Dovesprung gave his arm to Faith and led her to the gallery beyond, from whence they could view the superb panorama of harbor and sea

"You dance exquisitely," he said, in German. "I do not wish to interfere with Lyéff Petróvich's monopoly of the beautiful Russian equivalent for your name, yet I cannot pronounce it in English. I understand your language perfectly but never try to speak either English or modern Greek on account of that 't-h' sound, so I shall speak in German and call you 'Backfischly.'"

Faith laughed and replied in the same language, "Then our acquaintance must have an early termination."

"Are you offended?" he asked. "Believe me, I do not mean the appellation in any invidious sense. It has a sweet significance to me."

"I am not offended," she explained, "but in another year I shall be a full-fledged young lady, and there will be no more 'Backfischly.'"

He frowned. "Supply me with an enduring name, then," he commanded.

"My French and German friends and acquaintance call me by a name that also signifies Faith, the Latin form, 'Fidès.'"

"Fidès!" he repeated softly, "Fidès! Yes, that will suit you well, both in childhood and womanhood, in youth and maturity. Fidès! Yes, you shall be to me always 'Fidès.'"

Faith glanced about her a little nervously. It was now past ten o'clock and the music was beginning for the next waltz, the one she had promised to Lyéff Petróvich. By the customs of the ballroom she should return to sit by Lady Bowen till her partner came to claim her

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“You are looking for Lévochka,” said Dovsprung, quickly. “Never fear! He sees you. I know better than to take you out of range of his jealous gaze. He is watching us like a cat.”

Faith flushed angrily. “He is not so easily made jealous,” she declared.

He flashed a keen glance at her. “Is that a challenge?” he asked. “Do you ‘dare’ me to make him jealous? Then I ‘dare’ you, as a young lady of spirit, to assert your independence. Walk out with me on the terrace in the heavenly moonlight, and let him come in search of you. Show him you are not so easily won.”

“And show you that I am very easily won!” she retorted. “Thank you, but I prefer to respect the courtesies of the ballroom.”

“A very proper and laudable sentiment,” he remarked, dryly.

She felt that he was laughing at her. “I did not mean my statement as a ‘dare,’” she explained, meekly. “But I know that Lyéff Petróvich has great confidence in me, and I would not wish to be unworthy of it.” Then she grew scarlet. She was making the occasion unjustifiably serious.

“I, too, have great confidence in you,” said Dovsprung, gravely. “I would have staked my last possession on your refusing my challenge.”

“Then you were testing me,” she cried, indignantly. “That was unfair! I am very inexperienced. I might have gone with you, not knowing better.”

“I would not have let you,” he declared. “I would have given you a moral lecture and led you back to your matron. Believe me, we men adore the inexperience of innocence and we know how keen and unerring is its instinct to avoid wrong. I knew what type of woman I had to deal with, I knew you would not go. That is why I adore — *Fidès!*”

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And Solntsoff, trying with all his might not to appear to be watching the two, saw out of the corner of his eye Dovsprung's glossy brown head bend low over Faith's hand.

The next dance had begun, and Dovsprung should have led Faith back, yet there he was, detaining her in the corridor with his gallantries. Solntsoff's blood boiled. Men had fought duels for less reason! He turned away from the ball-room, his heart full of contempt for Youri Andrévich.

"He will dance with that innocent girl," he thought, bitterly, "and then he will leave her to pass the rest of his evening at a gay Bohemian supper in the town, on the invitation of a foreign adventuress whom he has never met, but who had the impudence to write him on his arrival. He will turn from this to go to that!"

Solntsoff had not lacked such invitations himself, though he knew how to ignore them. But where he had received three or four, the handsome Dovsprung's table was heaped with perfumed notes, both from the world of Bohemia and from women of the highest fashion.

Past-master in that fascinating and absorbing duel of wits and passions, the art of flirtation, Youri Andrévich was regarded by the feminine world in general with tender interest and emotion as the sentimental hero of a number of so-called "Platonic friendships" with women of rank and talent and fashion, friendships which a cynical society accepted outwardly with a smile and a shrug, while inwardly labeling them *non-Platonic*. But he was ever the gallant defender of the fair name of women, for whom he could "lie like a gentleman," or fight a duel on ostensibly trivial grounds, as occasion might require.

He had yawned over his love-missives with the indifference of one long habituated to such things. "The fledglings in their nests and the mother-birds on the branch all singing the same song," he remarked. "'Age cannot wither nor custom stale' the feminine heart. Here they

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go into the flames. Next! Next! This note interests me. I shall go. Her little suppers are said to be very sprightly, and this seems to be a general affair. She is of the very topmost circle of gay Bohemia, for there are well-defined circles there just as in ——”

“Hell!” suggested Solnstoff, dryly.

“Call it purgatory, my dear fellow,” said the other, lightly. “It is so near heaven! She signs herself ‘Alixé de St. Quentin,’ but I believe her name is really *Élise Schuster*. Have you met her?”

“No!” said Solntsoff, shortly, “I am not a connoisseur in ‘sprightliness.’”

“Oh, pardon! I understand and, in a measure, share your prejudices; but, in this case, one meets many from the great-world at her little suppers, and it would not compromise you if you cared to join us?”

“Thank you, I have other tastes and other engagements,” Solntsoff had replied, curtly.

It was insupportable that this man should be allowed to associate with a girl like Faith. Yet he himself had introduced them, remembering only Dovsprung’s punctilious, almost Quixotic chivalry toward the young and the inexperienced. He lightly called himself a sinner, and deserved to be so called; but, incorrigible flirt though he might be, and lacking in principle in many directions, Youri Andrévich was no trifler with the heart of innocence. When he played the game of false love it was with those who knew the game, who understood what such love as his meant. He played it strictly according to certain codes of honor widely accepted in smart, up-to-date ethics, and he held his handsome head high in the security of his position as “a man of honor and a gentleman.”

Faith had re-entered the ballroom just as Solntsoff left it. She had conscientiously waited through three dances in hopes of his coming to claim her, but Brandon reported see-

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ing him absorbed in a game of billiards, so she listlessly took a few turns with her cousin and with some of the young cadets. When, later, refreshments were served she took her seat with Lady Bowen and Brandon on the terrace. Dovsprung soon approached them, prettily greeted from many a table as he passed, gallant and debonair, but he came directly to Lady Bowen's table and seated himself by Faith.

"I have a vision," he said "dim and veiled as yet, but which will, I predict, emerge from obscurity to full revelation. In it I see you in our St. Petersburg society, where everything is truly Russian and genial. In England one goes into society from an instinct of self-preservation. You must be in the swim or be eternally lost! In France one goes to see and be seen. In Germany it is a duty, a part of the iron routine of life. In Italy one goes to gossip and be gossiped about. But in Russia we go frankly to enjoy ourselves, and to help others enjoy themselves. We really like it and get a great deal of pleasure out of it, which was doubtless the original intention of social life. You see, we are very primitive yet in many of our ideas. We still look upon social pleasures as mere pastimes, and fear that to raise them to the status of duties would be to render them obnoxious."

"In my country," laughed Faith, "our Puritan ancestors classed them as sins, and the Methodists do so to this day. Dancing, card-playing, the theatre, the opera, all are deadly sins!"

"Forbidden fruit! How that enhances their sweetness!" he observed, dryly. "Let me see! 'Thou shalt not dance, thou shalt not play cards, thou shalt not visit the ballet, thou —' heavens! how many commandments does that make? We have ten in my church, and that is already more than any one man has time to keep. But then, with all due respect to your forefathers, I understand those old Puritans took a grim joy in driving souls to hell."

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Faith glanced demurely at him. He had lighted a cigarette, and was daintily sipping a glass of Johannisberger, looking well satisfied with the world and its comforts.

“They have two more commandments,” she said, slyly. “Thou shalt not smoke, and thou shalt not drink wine!”

He stared at her. Then he laid down the cigarette and pushed aside the glass. Her young face, turned demurely away from him, was alight with mischief.

“My innocent pleasures! You are cruel!” he exclaimed, reproachfully.

“It was such a temptation to disturb you!” she apologized. “You looked so utterly content.”

“Who could be other than content? This romantic spot, the glorious view, the witching hour, a cigarette, a glass of wine and — Thou!”

“Oh, please do not call it ‘romantic,’” exclaimed Faith. “Romance is such a disagreeable thing!”

“You have found romance disagreeable?” queried the young officer in a tone of polite incredulity, and with a sly gleam in his handsome, gray eyes.

“Of course I have no experimental knowledge of romance,” she replied, coloring, “but in such novels as I have read, romance is synonymous with trouble. It means misunderstandings and separations and persecutions, tears and fears and trials of all sorts, sickness and sorrow and temptation. And when at last the troubles cease and the loved ones are united, then the story stops! The romance is over! The rest of life is compressed into one sentence — ‘they lived happily forever after,’ as if that were the antithesis of romance.”

“I did not think you could be so cynical,” he said, amused.

“Am I cynical?” she asked. “I do not even know what cynicism is.”

“You are not consciously cynical. Heaven forbid!” smiled Dovesprung. “You see, novelists recognize the weaknesses

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of humanity. We can wail and lament over our sorrows and trials, and take the whole world into our confidence; but the moment things go right with us we accept it placidly as our deserts and say nothing about it. Unless," he added, "some unkind little person, envious of our contentment, tries to fill us with scruples."

"That proves what an individual thing contentment is," said Faith, sagely. "For instance, I am quite indifferent to — er — cigarettes! On the other hand, many women would be quite indifferent to things that make me very happy indeed."

He thought of Lyéff Petróvich and thought this quite likely. "And are you fortunate enough to be so very happy?" he asked, with sentimental sigh and glance.

She turned and looked directly at him. "Not at all happy to-night," she replied, frankly. "I failed to keep my appointment with Lyéff Petróvich and it has spoiled my whole evening."

He started up, deeply mortified. "Forgive me, Backfischly, if it was through fault of mine in detaining you!" he exclaimed. "God forbid that I should ever come between you and your happiness!" And he looked truly penitent and distressed.

At midnight Solntsoff sauntered back to the ballroom. He had played billiards for nearly two hours with Graf Milítsyn. He hated billiards, and Milítsyn bored him to extinction. It had been an unprofitable evening. Passing through the corridor he saw Dovsprung escort the ladies back to the ballroom, bid them an elaborate farewell at the door, then come out on the terrace, throw a light Inverness-cape over his evening dress and start leisurely toward the centre of the city.

Solntsoff gave a snort of disgust, turned abruptly away, and hurried to join Lady Bowen and her young charge.

Faith's eyes met his with a somewhat reproachful glance.

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“I thought we were to have had a waltz together!” she said.

“I supposed you wished to forget it,” he replied, distantly. “You were well provided for, as you had the best dancer in St. Petersburg.”

Faith suppressed a giggle. He was actually jealous. How funny! This big, stately man jealous about her! Surely she was growing up!

“I was only a minute late,” she explained. “I sat through three dances hoping you would come back. Graf von Dowsprung dances beautifully but he is insufferably conceited. It was a stupid evening altogether.”

He ought surely to have felt sorry for her, but he turned his face aside to smother a laugh, a man’s cruel laugh of triumph.

“You must not judge Youri Andrévich too severely, if he is somewhat spoiled,” he said, amiably, quite restored to good humor. A moment ago he had thought contemptuously of Dowsprung, but now he was full of indulgence for him. “He is really a splendid fellow in many respects, a brave, capable officer, a thoroughly honest and very brilliant administrator of his department. He has a warm heart, like all true Russians, and is not without his ideals. I have known him all my life, and he was as good and high-minded a lad as I ever met till he was twenty-two or twenty-three years old, and in many ways is so still, although — er —”

He hesitated. It was not easy to explain to large-eyed, wondering girlhood the subtle distinctions that differentiate one man-of-the-world from another! He shrugged his shoulders and resumed.

“Since then our paths have separated. He has been military attaché at a number of European courts, where he was a great social favorite, and you can simply have no idea of all the flattery and courtship he has been subjected

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to, — so handsome, so accomplished, so rich! He has gone with a gay, ultra-fashionable set and has gradually absorbed their careless, worldly ideas and manners, while my sober tastes have led me to conservative and literary circles."

"And my tastes," thought Faith, "lead me to *you*," but she could not well say this aloud. "If he has the ideas and manners of the worldly set," she remarked, "then I do not like the world. I feel more at home with the literary set to which you — and your uncle — belong." She threw in the uncle's name in a sudden panic for fear of seeming too personal and forward.

And again Solntsoff averted his face to smother a laugh.

It was little wonder that when the prince retired to his bedroom, fifteen minutes later, he should be in the most amiable and genial of moods. He well knew that ninety-nine girls out of a hundred would prefer Dovsprung to himself, but what did it matter since the hundredth, who was the only one to him, saw with different eyes?

He hummed a cheerful air as he undressed. He was just diving into his nightshirt when some one knocked. Fearing a despatch from his uncle, whose health was a constant source of anxiety, he snatched up his bathrobe and advancing hastily but discreetly to the door, opened it a crack and peeped out. There stood Youri Andrévich.

"I thought I should find you up. Who ever heard of a Russian going to bed before five in the morning? May I come in, Brother?"

"With pleasure. You did not stay long at your supper."

Dovsprung removed his Inverness and laid it with his opera hat across a chair, with great deliberation. Then he drew up an armchair and settled himself slowly and comfortably into it.

"I did not go, after all," he said, at length.

Solntsoff watched him narrowly, but made no comment.

"I need not tell you that I am no saint," said Dovsprung

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after a pause, “but that does not mean that I am not open to fine impressions. Somehow, Lyóva, I could not spend half the evening by the side of — well, of sweetest innocence and noblest maidenhood, and then go straight to an — Alixe de St. Quentin and her associates. Thank God, my spirit is susceptible to higher influences.”

Solntsoff crossed the room and laid his hand on the other’s shoulder. “Yúrochka,” he said with emotion, “you have a heart and a conscience, if you would only be guided by them oftener. Why do you not do justice to your nobler, better self? You ought to settle down and marry some good, affectionate, companionable girl and you would find yourself a very happy man, and she would, I feel sure, have a model husband.”

“Unfortunately,” said Dovsprung, with a short, harsh laugh, “you have monopolized the first one that has appealed to my cynical heart since my boyish days when I was betrothed to a little kinswoman, my young sister’s dearest friend.” He drew a deep sigh. “They both died before I was twenty years of age, but for their sakes young girlhood has always been holy to me. Since I have been a man of the world my tastes have been, as you know, for the society of older, more sophisticated women; the clever, alluring type of married woman, a little out of tune with matrimony, who begins as the intellectual, sympathetic friend, the spiritual confidante who wishes to convert you, and ends” — he gave a cynical half smile — “by preferring you unconverted! I never imagined myself capable of being interested again in an unsophisticated Backfischly.”

Solntsoff had grown very pale. Why should this man, courted and beloved by so many fair women, begrudge him his one ewe-lamb?

“I think I explained to you,” he said, coldly, “that my intentions toward Miss Brandon were serious. I have been

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the first to enter the lists, and I intend to hold them against all comers. It will be a struggle to the death!"

Dovsprung looked up in surprise. "Of course I understand you, Brother," he said pleasantly, "and you must not misunderstand me. When have I ever come between any man and his intended bride? Should I forget honor for the first time when it touches a friend? No, I am not thinking of matrimony. This is a purely spiritual impression, which will soon wear away, leaving me the same old '*Geórgiy Pobyedonósets*.'"

It was this name, signifying "St. George the Victorious," which had been bestowed on Dovsprung in fashionable clubs and drawing-rooms, after he had been decorated by the Emperor with the Cross of St. George the Victorious* for his heroic services in the trans-Caspian; his name "Youri" being a Slavic form for "George."

"Do not speak as if you had always been the same," said Solntsoff, gravely. "I can remember the days when you were still truly 'Saint' George, and a happier man than now, in spite of your bravado."

"It is all in the point of view," said Dovsprung, with a careless laugh. "I am more sophisticated now and could no longer be happy in the old way. But I still have principles that guide and restrain me, though not the same as yours."

"No!" retorted Solntsoff. "There was a time when our principles were the same, but now they are as far apart as the poles. Our views of life are as dissimilar as if we lived in different solar systems."

"Perhaps," said Dovsprung, slowly, half closing his eyes, "perhaps the difference is not as great as you think. Our views are not so far apart but that I can come openly to you to lay my tribute on the shrine you worship at."

* The Cross of St. George is bestowed for personal bravery. It corresponds to the Victoria Cross of England, except that it is for officers only.

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Solntsoff flushed. He held out his hand. “If I have been unjust, forgive me! ’ he said. “If I have been harsh in condemning you, it is for the very affection and respect I still bear you.”

Dovsprung rose, and the two men embraced with some emotion.

Before settling to rest Solntsoff spent some minutes at his orisons before the Ikona, the picture of the Saviour, which he had hung by his bedside. In addition to his usual night prayers, in which he remembered his dear Little Comrade, all his family living and dead, his own special interests and the welfare of beloved Russia, he threw in a good word to the Heavenly Powers for his somewhat cynical and unprincipled but not wholly corrupted friend. Then he turned into bed, and with one hand clasping the silver cross that hung from his neck, he quickly settled down to profoundest slumber.

And the grave eyes of the pictured Christ seemed to gaze with complacency at His “good and faithful servant.”

Dovsprung also said his prayers, after a fashion of his own. He, too, had ensconced an Ikona of exquisite workmanship in a corner of the room. He was a Russian and certain early ingrained practices of faith still clung to him, even after years of indifference and sin. Having expected to return at an indefinitely late hour he had dismissed his man early in the evening, for he was a considerate master, and was now struggling out of his dress-suit alone. It was a saving of time, perhaps also, a saving of thought, to sandwich in his abbreviated orisons between the various preparations for bed. He kicked off his shoes. ““Glory to the Father!”” he began, ““and to the Son, and to’ — the devil! Where did that lazy Astáfi put my slippers? If I had known — but how the deuce was I to foresee that a child like that would disarrange all my well-laid plans? It is that maddening blend of innocence and distinction, of

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honesty and breeding, of intelligence and guilelessness. Er — where was I? ‘Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, for the eternal ages.’” Here he crossed himself and bowed deeply. “It is just as well to leave before the illusion is dispelled.” Here he fastened his night-shirt and, drawing out the small, beautifully enameled cross, which he wore suspended from a gold chain about his neck, he kissed it, blessed himself with it and thrust it back into place again, saying rapidly, “Christ, Redeemer of the world, have mercy! Holy-Pure Mother of God, bless us and pray for us, and keep in eternal remembrance the souls of the departed dear ones!”

This done, he felt that the necessities of devotion had been complied with. To be sure, in his youth he had been taught to make an act of sorrow for his sins before going to sleep, in preparation for possible sudden death, but that was one of the things that had been omitted from his prayers in their abbreviation. For the formula of repentance contains a resolution to turn from sin and amend one’s ways, and this he did not feel prepared to make. “I am no hypocrite,” he said, virtuously, feeling that this sincerity on his part must somehow meet with the approval of the Most High and atone for his failure to commit himself by any promises of reform, made only to be broken at the first desirable opportunity. So far as his prayers went they were sincere, for he certainly hoped for mercy and a lenient judgment, for many blessings in this world, and all the joys of heaven hereafter. And he had no doubt but that he should obtain them. “We are not all fitted for the cloister, and God understands it,” he said, easily. So he hoped on, for hope is consoling and commits one to nothing.

He darkened the room and disposed himself to slumber.

“She is such a sympathetic listener! It is that, I suppose, that charms the conceited and garrulous Lyéff Petróvich. I had forgotten he had such a disagreeable, priggish temper.

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Perhaps her father will not consent. Lyóva's means are very limited, and Americans care so much for money. What then?" He checked himself suddenly. "What then, indeed! How long could a little schoolgirl like that hold me? I would not marry the child to break her heart, but am I ready to change my life for her? ready, at thirty-three, to settle down into a commonplace, dutiful husband and conscientious father of a family? I can give up my pleasures once for her sake, and even feel it sweet to do so, but — would it last? As our Russian proverb says 'a wife is not a guitar; when your playing is done you can't hang her upon the wall!' Could I go on, day in and day out, year in and year out, with no amusement, no variety in the way of charming friendships, tender flirtations, thrilling conquests — nothing but the stupid routine of official and conjugal life, long dull evenings at home, with unvarying companionship, cloying affection, poorly cooked meals, the monotony broken only by wrangling domestics and fretful children?"

He shuddered. "What then, indeed!" He was bored to death already by the picture. With an impatient gesture he turned on his side. There was a moment's silence then —

"I begin to think I acted like a fool!" muttered "Geórgiy Pobyedonósets," drowsily.

The lamp burning before the Ikona threw its soft rosy light upon the face of the sleeping man, and the pictured eyes of the thorn-crowned Christ looked gravely down upon this wayward son.

But the countenance of the celestial guardian, so often veiled and shamed, was lifted joyfully, appealingly to heaven as though saying, "Father, he hath refrained from evil company for the sake of one of Thy little ones. Let it be counted to him for righteousness!"

PART II

CHAPTER XI

A BOLT FROM THE BLUE

“With thee, the wind and sky are fair,
But parted, both are strange and dark,
And treacherous the quiet air —
Oh, shield my love, strong Arm above!”
— *Meredith.*

Two days after Faith's departure from Yalta, Genevieve Brandon had the mortification of seeing Prince Solntsoff leave on the weekly steamer for Constantinople. Evidently the game was up.

“I was a fool not to have let him know that she had no dowry, that Sophy and I had all the money,” she grumbled to herself.

She and her sister took the steamer for Athens the following week. While there she received a lengthy letter from Bishop Ludlow.

“I and my son were very favorably impressed with Prince Solntsoff, whose moral character, my nephew assures me, is irreproachable” (wrote his lordship).

“Stuff!” interrupted Genevieve. “Solntsoff and Milbanke are birds of a feather, and Milbanke is hoping to be promoted to the Russian embassy. The bishop is a bombastic old snob, who is overjoyed to associate with princes and future viscounts. How he longs to be able to say ‘my nephew, Lord Solway,’ and ‘my niece, Princess Solntsova.’ He would swallow a good deal for that.” Then she read on:

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"Your father having deferred to my judgment in the matter, I decided that the engagement shall not be announced till her seventeenth birthday; but meanwhile I have permitted an understanding, the marriage to be conditional upon his recognizing the Anglo-Catholic position."

"Which of course he will do, if Milbanke and the bishop make it worth his while by giving the girl a good dowry!" sneered Genevieve. "Pah! Those High-Churchmen make me tired. Protestantism is no longer good enough for them with their 'Apostolic Succession' and 'Anglo-Catholic position.' Give me Unitarianism! There you have a Protestantism that is logical."

Sophy looked up in surprise. She had no idea that Genevieve was so interested in theology. She herself was a devout and regular attendant at the First Unitarian Church, but Genevieve had not entered a church half a dozen times in as many years. Of course, the Unitarians were the most intellectual of any denomination, that was universally acknowledged, — in Boston at least. But still there was something very impressive about the Episcopal liturgy, and Bishop Ludlow read the service in such an inspired manner. Sophy was guiltily conscious of a secret liking for robes and ceremonials and stained-glass windows, but having other burdens on her conscience as well, she dared make no comments.

Genevieve tossed her head scornfully. "Really," she exclaimed, "I am astonished that they do not present her at court at once! But let them do as they please, I wash my hands of the whole affair."

The bishop, however, could devise no better plan than that already settled upon by Miss Brandon. It was not advisable for Faith to be in Constantinople for her winter's work, and Rupert would not be settled in his new quarters at Brussels before the early spring. Therefore she accompanied Lady Bowen to Leipsic and was placed in

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a German family to pursue a course of study, while her uncle traveled in the Holy Land, her cousin returned to college, and her sisters joined friends in a yachting trip.

And throughout the autumn and winter Faith studied assiduously, and devoured historical works and political reviews, for was she not preparing herself to be the companion of a man in public life and of literary tastes? Her Sundays were consecrated to the books lent her by her lover on the doctrines and history of his Church, and also to the somewhat ponderous controversial tomes prescribed by her uncle. Nor did she neglect the practical things of existence. The prince had told her that he was a poor man, that they must live modestly, as middle-class people. So once every week she accompanied her German landlady to market and into the kitchen, and was duly initiated by her into the mysteries of household economics and forearmed against the iniquities of domestics and tradespeople.

Rupert Milbanke, stopping on his westward journey in the spring to see Faith, thought her looking a little pale from overstudy and from the confinement of city life and lack of amusement. Or, was it the general unbecomingness of the Misses Brandon's cast-off frocks and hats? At any rate, he advised her acceptance of an invitation from her Yalta friends, the Alyónkins, to spend a month at Easter with them at their villa at Territet on Lake Geneva, and presented his grateful and enraptured little sister with a generous check wherewith to renew her wardrobe from top to toe.

"Mind, you are not to use as much as a handkerchief that has ever belonged to anybody else!" he declared, peremptorily.

Lady Bowen promised to follow her to Switzerland a little later, and Rupert escorted Faith to Territet, giving her a few days' outing on the way at Munich, to hear the opera there.

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"I shall be ready for you in a few weeks, and your home shall be with me till you marry, though, of course, at your age, you are not yet entertaining thoughts of matrimony," teased the big brother.

One week of her visit with the hospitable, warm-hearted Alyónkins had passed in the delightful simplicity of the open-air life in the pleasant Swiss watering-place, when Faith received a letter from her sister Genevieve, which made her heart sink in dismay.

The ways of Providence are full of mystery. How it could happen that, on a five-weeks' cruise among the Isles of Greece, the one eligible man of the party, thrown in daily propinquity with both sisters, should choose the plain, uninteresting Sophy instead of her graceful, clever sister, Genevieve Brandon could not comprehend!

He had first seemed drawn to herself, and perhaps she had felt too sure of her conquest; but by scarcely perceptible degrees he had slipped away from her control, and before she fully realized his changed position the game was lost. The Honorable Gerard Trevor, member of Parliament, brother of Lord Dugdale, with a country house and an income of eight thousand pounds a year in his own right, had actually proposed to Sophy Brandon and been gratefully and tremblingly accepted by that insignificant spinster. Genevieve felt that, for the third time, she had played her cards badly and let a title slip away from her grasp. In the other instances she could hardly blame herself. When she had slighted Rupert Milbanke and ridiculed his Briticisms, she could not foresee that he would so soon be an eligible widower. When she had left Faith at Yalta she did not know that the big, fair man about whom the little schoolgirl was so silly was a distinguished writer, of an historic, princely family, with a brilliant position at court. But this yachting trip had been of her own devising. She had met the Trev ladies in Athens, had heard them

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speak of their brother and his enthusiasm for yachting, and she had successfully brought about this autumnal cruise and its golden opportunity. And now, through no fault of hers that she could see, the prize had fallen to the wrong one! It was absurd! How Genevieve would have queened it in London as the wife of a rising member of Parliament, how gracefully she would have entertained at week-ends in Leicestershire! In time he would be knighted, or made a peer, and she would be Lady Trevor. But the cup had been dashed from her lips and given to Sophy, the old maid, the near-sighted student, the goody-goody worker in the Associated Charities and College Settlements.

And somehow Sophy, with the wonder, the unexpectedness, the happiness of it all illuminating her face, no longer looked plain and unattractive. Perhaps Genevieve had never before done her justice. The clear-headed, kind-hearted, good-principled young woman had a blind devotion to her more beautiful and pretentious sister, and had weakly allowed herself to be so completely dominated by her that she had lost her respect, and Genevieve never took Sophy seriously into account in any of her calculations. But the esteem and affection of an able and manly man had transformed the thirty-year-old bachelor-girl; and it was a new Sophy that Genevieve looked at with heightened respect, but with an exceeding bitter spirit.

Then came lonely days. Genevieve missed inexpressibly the unselfish, devoted companionship of the useful and self-effacing Sophy, who was visiting the relatives of her future husband in England. In this emergency her thoughts turned toward her younger sister. Their father was making Faith a liberal allowance for board, education, and traveling expenses, far too liberal, Genevieve thought, for the requirements of a schoolgirl; and Faith would have little use for it, as she was planning visits with Russian friends and, later, was to live with her brother. But, if the two

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sisters were to join forces, they could divide between them the expenses of a sitting-room and of various other luxuries which Genevieve felt were indispensable to the comforts of travel and hotel life.

"Since Sophy's engagement I am left very lonely," wrote the older sister, "for I am entirely cut off from her society in the future from reasons of delicacy. Of course you must never breathe this to a soul, but Trevor first wanted to marry me. However, I could not consider it, and am very glad for her sake that he afterward turned to Sophy. But you can see that, under the circumstances, it would be very tactless for me ever to visit them. Until Father is ready for us to keep house in Boston, it will be best that you and I should join forces. It is a more economical arrangement; it will give me companionship and give you the protection and advice of an older woman, always so necessary to an inexperienced young girl. I should like to try the climate of Switzerland, and will come to Montreux for the Easter season with my friends, Mrs. Brownell and the Misses Staffney, of a fine Connecticut family, with whom I have been traveling since we returned from Greece. We shall go to the Pension Witzen-Elias, where, I hear, there are English-speaking people. It is very near the place you are visiting, and you will, of course, join me there at once."

It was a hard struggle for Faith to resign herself to this prospect, to shorten her stay with the pleasant Alyónkins and delay indefinitely her visit to Rupert. But her heart softened toward Genevieve in her loneliness, and she could see that it was the natural and obvious thing for two sisters to be together. When the kindly, affectionate Russians demurred at her cutting her visit short, she promised to come over daily from Montreux to see them. But she had reckoned without her host. When Faith proposed to walk to Territet on the following day, her sister interfered.

"Have you no delicacy?" exclaimed Genevieve. "How

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could your brother think of letting you stay there, with big boys of your own age, and only that one poor woman, with a perfect brute of a husband? It is no place for a young girl to visit!"

"But he is not a brute!" cried Faith, indignantly. "He is devoted to his wife and spends half his days with her, reading aloud to her or taking her to drive. And the boys just worship the ground she treads on, and are so fond of their little brothers and sisters."

"The count is a red-faced old *roué*," insisted Genevieve, who knew nothing whatever of his habits. "He may appear to you to be kind and pleasant, but he is simply brutal to his wife, and no one knows what she has to endure. A raft of children like that! It is positively revolting!"

The tears stood in Faith's eyes. "They think it is a blessing from heaven," she said, loyally. "The Bible says so, too!"

"Oh, the Bible!" sneered Genevieve. "Those were times when people lived in tents and the women had no books, no education, no social life and few household cares. If it amused them to have children, then it was right for them to have big families; but nowadays women have other interests and duties, have many careers open to them. You might as well expect the men to go back to the pastoral life and give up science and art and modern civilization, as expect the women of to-day to give up their lives to tending herds of babies."

"But the countess's life isn't given up to that alone," said Faith, eagerly. "She says she has splendid opportunities to educate herself reading and studying up with her husband and children the subjects they are interested in. She is a very cultivated and accomplished woman, and she has picked up nearly all of it since her marriage."

"It must be very superficial at best," said Genevieve,

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contemptuously. "And of what earthly use is it to her, shut up at home as she is all the time? But these are not proper subjects for a young girl to discuss. You must not go over there, and let that end it!"

Faith submitted, for it was a question of delicacy, and Genevieve knew more about such matters than she did. But she was very lonely without these friends, for Genevieve spent all her time with the three American ladies, leaving Faith entirely to her own devices, till the girl began to wonder why her companionship had been desired at all.

However, she had happy employment for her leisure hours corresponding with Lyéff Petróvich. He had been sent on a special mission to Teheran, which had lasted five months. Now he was in attendance on the Emperor at Petergof, coming in to the capital three times a week for his work at the Foreign Office. His letters were full of interesting details about his Persian journey, his work at the office, his life at Court. He told her of playing tennis and canoeing with the Gosudár,* of the Imperatritsa's clever caricature drawings, of the amusing sayings of the little grand-princesses. He told of boating parties on the Gulf of Finland, he described the many distinguished visitors and the various national deputations received daily at the palace, and gave amusing anecdotes and witty comments. But they were the letters of a "big friend" to his "little comrade," rather than of a lover to his betrothed.

And Faith, on her side, wrote fully, sympathetically, but as to a kind older brother, for had not Rupert warned her to be discreet?

"In corresponding with any man, whether engaged to

* The state title of the Emperor is "Imperátor" and "Autocrat (*Samodérzhets*) of all the Russias." The title "Tsar" is historic only. The court title of the Emperor is "Gosudár (Lord) Imperátor"; of the Empress, "Gosudárina Imperatritsa." The heir-apparent's title is "Naslédnik-Tsesarévích." They are familiarly spoken of as "Gosudár," "Imperatritsa," and "Naslédnik" (Successor). The titles "Tsar" and "Tsaritza" are never used in Russia by educated people.

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him or not," he had said, "remember that no matter how cautious and honorable he may be, there is always danger of letters falling into the hands of those they were not intended for, or going astray in the mails. Never write anything in them that you are not willing should be read by a third person. It is a safe general rule to follow. Also, do not write oftener to him than he does to you. Answer each letter as it comes, but let that be all."

"I will remember," promised Faith. . "I will be discreet." But in spite of this necessary reticence, what a delight it was to correspond with her Big Friend, to express her sympathy with all that concerned him, to tell him of her studies, her interests, her impressions of the books he had recommended her to read, and to receive in return his kindly comments, his wise direction, his unfailing comprehension. How it softened the separation to receive the thick manuscripts that reached her twice a week with such clock-like regularity!

Nor was this her only correspondence. There were frequent and amusing letters from Rupert and from her cousin, friendly and pleasant ones from the Stourdzas, while every week brought a tenderly affectionate, though somewhat formal note from one or other of the dear maiden-aunts in Mt. Vernon Street; and the Easter holidays had favored her with a lengthy, serious letter of good advice for the formation of womanly character from the father who had been content to live nearly seventeen years in almost total ignorance of the character of this particular specimen of young womanhood for whose existence he was responsible. Then into the monotony of these long, quiet, autumn weeks there dropped a bomb in the shape of a letter from Bishop Ludlow.

The bishop had been charmed with his reception in Russia. He had gone to Moscow, to Kíyef, and other large cities, armed with letters of introduction to the hier-

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archy and to leading personages in the literary and religious life of these places, and had been received with a courtesy, a cordiality, a large-heartedness and freedom from prejudice that wholly captivated him. He talked freely to the higher clergy and to the laity of his ideas for the reunion of Christendom through the middle-road of the Church of England, the "Anglo-Catholic Church," he called it; and everywhere he found polite, attentive listeners. It did not occur to him to try to gather their views of the Anglican position. His mission was more directly to enlighten them as to the Anglican view of their own position, and they did not seem inclined to obtrude their opinions.

He was very thankful indeed that he had taken this journey without his wife and son. For his fellow bishops of the Orthodox Church were all celibates, the higher orders of the clergy being appointed from the "black," or celibate, monastic clergy. It seemed to give them a certain dignity, a holy aloofness, in contrast to the bishops whom he had met in England accompanied by their fashionably dressed helpmates. The "white," or parish clergy, on the contrary, were married; and here he made one of the few mistakes with which he had to reproach himself, for, meeting a young, unmarried clergyman, he had laughingly advised him to make haste in choosing a helpmate.

"But I cannot marry!" said the young man, looking as nearly shocked as a polite, kind-hearted and slow-blooded Slav is capable of looking. "I have already received Holy Orders, and one cannot marry after one is ordained."

The bishop hastened to inform himself further on the question. "No, our clergy do not marry," explained the archimandrite to whom he applied. "We encourage, we almost require our candidates for the secular priesthood to be married men, but the marriage must have taken place before they receive Holy Orders."

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"But if the parochial clergy may be married, why not the higher clergy?" asked the bishop. "Why are not your married priests raised to the dignities of the church?"

"It is best for them to be disinterestedly devoted to their parishes and not troubled by dreams of power and advancement. But the celibate clergy, living under the discipline of the monastic rule, having abundant time for study, and wholly untrammelled by family cares, are better formed for the administration of the Church's affairs. I may add that our celibate clergy is far more respected and popular than our married clergy. The people are idealists. They do not like their priests to live too much the lives of the laity. They prefer to have them set apart and consecrated to a higher life."

At this point our bishop thought best to change the subject to that of the political outlook. His observations had, however, in one particular, brought distinct consolation to his spirit. It was evident that the Russian clergy were not a factor in the social life of the country. Even the bishops had not the aristocratic position held by the higher clergy in the Church of England or in the life of American communities, while the parochial clergy were classed with the peasantry, rather than with the gentry. This lack of social dignity and influence counterbalanced, in his mind, their seemingly greater ascendancy over the people in things spiritual. It was largely on this ground that he had decided not to visit St. Petersburg during the coming summer, while the members of the government and the aristocracy were scattered in the country or at the seaside. As for the clergy, not belonging to aristocratic circles they could be met at any season. He had heard that the Swedish State Church had an episcopate, and had retained more of Catholic doctrine and ritual than other Lutheran bodies. It would be a wise plan to examine into conditions in Sweden while waiting

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for a favorable season to visit St. Petersburg. The impressions of his Swedish visit were sketched in the following letter.

"My dear Miss Brandon," it said, for it was addressed to Genevieve:

"My six weeks in Sweden, where I have been looking into the conditions of the state church, have not been productive of results. Though they have preserved much of the Catholic ritual and have an episcopate, yet I find that the Swedish clergy are essentially Protestant in their views, and evince no desire toward church reunion.

"I had planned next to meet the Orthodox authorities in St. Petersburg, but I hear disturbing reports that Prince Solntsoff has been dismissed from Court and from his position at the Foreign Office, and that serious disclosures are expected. Until his name is cleared I feel that my mission would lose prestige if it were known that I was connected with him in any way. I was, as you know, to have been his guest. I have consequently postponed my visit till autumn, when I hope to be introduced to the Russian hierarchy under more favorable auspices. In the meantime, I shall visit the Orthodox synods in the Balkans.

"I leave it to you to break the news to Faith, and I fervently trust that Divine Providence will guide you in this delicate matter.

"Devotedly yours,
+ "W. WROXETER" +

Genevieve's face lighted up with triumph. She had always foreseen that there would be trouble sooner or later. How foolish Milbanke and the bishop had been to believe in that man!

She looked hastily over the rest of the mail. Three letters were for Faith, one from America, one from Lady Bowen, the third from St. Petersburg. Genevieve grew thoughtful. Faith was very young to correspond with a man, a foreigner, of whom they knew so little, and who was now under a cloud. It seemed a duty that some one should

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supervise their correspondence, should know what kind of letters he wrote. They might not be fit for a young girl to receive. Had not the bishop left it to her judgment to decide how Faith should learn of this matter?

She heard a light step coming dancing along the corridor, and heard a gay, sweet young voice calling, "Hurrah! Letters for me!" She thrust the envelope hastily into her blouse.

Faith burst into the room like a ray of sunshine. "Babette says there are three letters for me!" she announced, joyously.

"I see only two," corrected Genevieve, giving them to the girl.

"Why, why" — stammered Faith, "she said there was one from Russia."

"Well?" said Genevieve, suavely, "May I not have friends in Russia, too?"

"Oh, I didn't know! I beg your pardon," apologized Faith, who had hard work to keep back the tears.

"No, you did not know, because I had not thought fit to tell you that I am making some investigations that concern you. I did not wish to rouse one of your tempers."

"Investigate all you like," said Faith, proudly. "You will learn nothing but what is creditable," and she walked off with her mail, holding her head very straight, but with a heavy heart, for the expected letter was already a day overdue.

Genevieve waited till she was gone and then locked the door. Drawing out the envelope she opened it skilfully, splitting the edges apart with a long hat-pin rolled carefully between. She unfolded the letter. "I told her no lies," she remarked. "I said I was investigating — so I am." The letter was written in French, fortunately, as Genevieve was unable to read Russian.

"My beloved Little Comrade (it began),

"It is difficult for me to write, for I am suffering under one of the cruellest blows that ever struck down a man's

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pride, and I know that you, too, will suffer keenly from it on my account. I expected, as you are aware, to resign my position in the Foreign Office at the end of the year; but now I have been kicked out! There is no other expression for it. The process was not softened for me in any way. I had no warning. I was given no chance to resign. I simply received private notice that the Emperor released me from my duties in that department. It was a bolt from the blue.

"My Little Comrade, you must not be angry and cry that I have been unjustly treated. You must see your Big Friend as others see him, and realize that the man who is dear to you has his faults and makes his mistakes. I need not assure you that I have done nothing dishonorable, nor even blundered seriously in my work. But I have been gravely at fault in my manner of doing it. I am too abrupt in my methods, too uncompromising in temper, too impatient and satirical in speech, too intolerant of all the red-tape and intrigue and obsequiousness of bureaucratic life. It is easier for me to work alone than in conjunction with others, and I would willingly do the work of three to be spared the necessity of consulting the other two. In this, of course, I am wrong. I have gone against the conservative traditions of the office, which require consultation at every step. I have offended those who are better fitted by temperament than I to conduct the affairs of the department. My friends have long warned me of my faults and I have not heeded them. I was conscious of my own sincerity and loyalty and high purpose, and I believed that the Emperor trusted me and liked me, and was in sympathy with my aims. I see now that I only added to his cares and anxieties by trying to kick over the traces. He is an excellent judge of men and he sees what I and all my friends have long known, that I am not fitted for diplomacy, and that he must appoint in my place some one who will pull better with the rest of the team. The only wonder is that he has put up so long with such a free-lance as I.

"No reasons have been given out for my dismissal. Indeed, it has not yet been publicly gazetted, but it has leaked out and caused a lot of gossip and surmise which, however, need not distress you. I have sent in my resignation

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from my position in the Imperial household, but have not heard yet if it is accepted.

"I need not tell you how keenly I have felt this disgrace, how deeply it has wounded me in my best feelings, my devotion to my Emperor and my country, and how intensely I have suffered through less worthy feelings of vanity, self-love and personal ambition. No doubt I deserved the sharp discipline, but it is none the less a severe, a bitter correction.

"Faith! Faith! I will not insult your disinterested affection and devotion by offering you your freedom, for I know that the tender heart of my Little Comrade longs to come to me and comfort me in my trouble. Courage, dear! I shall live it down, and be a better and a wiser man for it, God helping me! But I am a poorer man even than when I told you of my affairs, poorer in this world's goods and honors, poorer in reputation and opportunity, poorer in friends and well-wishers, but rich in the consolations of conscience, in a few tried friends, and in you, my Vyéra!

"In distress, as in joy, ever your

"LIONEL."

Genevieve's eyes glistened. "I have felt all along," she exclaimed, "that I was perfectly justified in my opposition to this man. Evidently there is some deep disgrace about the affair. No man is dismissed from office in that summary way without cause. There is a scandal to be hushed up and he is deceiving the child with these trivial excuses. His manner, indeed! His manners are perfectly charming, and he is no fool to spoil his career by assuming disagreeable ones."

She gave a short laugh. "That I should ever have thought of him for myself! It only shows how the wisest heads can be carried away by a fine figure and a high-sounding title."

And by dint of thinking over her lucky escape, Genevieve Brandon almost succeeded in persuading herself that she could have married the prince had she so desired.

CHAPTER XII

THE LAST STRAW

Beneath the wing of stillness all was sleeping,
The sighing winds, the very waves at rest,
And scarce a breath upon the sea was creeping;
The pale moon swam upon the white cloud's breast.
But I was troubled, peace had left my soul —
I stretched my hands toward him whom I no more could see.”
— *Bátyushkoff*.

THAT evening Genevieve called Faith into her room. She drew her young sister down to the sofa beside her, put her arm about her affectionately, brushed the hair softly from her brow and kissed her tenderly.

Faith was alarmed. She was accustomed to coldness, to neglect, to reprimand, occasionally even to personal violence. But this tenderness was something wholly novel.

“Is it bad news?” she faltered. There were so many dreadful possibilities, her lover, her brother and his little ones, her dear aunts, Sophy, her cousin and uncle, and — she had almost forgotten — her father!

“No, little sister, not bad news, though it may seem so at first. But it is really good news, since it comes in time to save you from a future of misery, a life-long unhappiness. Be a brave, sensible little woman, Faith, and see that all is for the best.”

“Don’t try to break it gently, tell me at once!” interrupted Faith, hoarsely.

“Dear little sister, the man your innocent little heart trusted in turns out, just as I feared, to be wholly unworthy of you. Prince Solntsoff has been disgraced. He has been driven from court by the Emperor for charges that are too

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grave to be made public," and she gave Faith the bishop's letter.

Faith was not much disturbed. "It cannot possibly be Lyéff Petróvich. It is some other of the name. There are two branches of the Solntsoff family, and several members are in the Imperial service," she said, confidently.

"No, no! It is your Prince Leo Solntsoff. There is no possibility of mistake, for, you see," — Genevieve weighed her words carefully, as she prided herself on saying nothing that was not verbally the exact truth — "as I told you, I have been investigating, for it was my duty to do so in your interests. The Russian letter that came this morning was from Prince Solntsoff himself. Entirely unsolicited by me, he has written a full confession of his guilt."

"He has written — a confession — and to you!" said Faith, slowly and incredulously.

"In black on white he acknowledges that he fully deserves his punishment, and realizes that you should have your freedom. He makes no attempt to excuse himself, he admits that these — er — these things for which he is dismissed have been going on for a long time, that his friends warned him repeatedly that he was ruining himself, and that he made no attempt to reform. The only comfort you can take, dear, is to thank God you learned his true character before it was too late," and she bent forward to kiss her sister again.

"Don't kiss me! I don't want to be kissed!" cried Faith, petulantly, drawing herself away from Genevieve's embrace. Her mind was confused. She could not think clearly. She only felt irritated and incredulous. It was absurd to suppose Lyéff Petróvich could do anything disgraceful

"Poor child! I do not wonder you are nervous," said Genevieve, compassionately. She felt really sorry for Faith, and nothing but her stern sense of duty enabled her to go on unflinchingly in her chosen path.

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"Show me his letter," said Faith, suddenly. "I have a right to see it. If he had any confession to make, it should have been written to me."

"To you! What are you thinking of?" exclaimed her sister. "If the charges against him are so grave that they cannot be made public, how could he write about them to an innocent young girl like you? He would have to suppress the most important. He would have decency enough left for that! Even to me he could not write the very worst."

Faith was angry through and through. "There are ten Commandments," she said. "Which one has he broken? Has he murdered any one, or run away with his neighbor's wife? Has he stolen, or committed perjury? Which of these heads do his crimes come under?"

"Faith! You have such a coarse way of expressing yourself!"

"But how can I believe charges against a man unless I know what the charges are? I refuse to condemn him until I learn exactly what he confesses to."

"It is not fitting you should know," said Genevieve, coldly. "You must abide by the judgment of your elders."

"I will!" said Faith. "I will abide by Rupert's judgment! Show the letter to him. He can make inquiries better than a woman can, and he is my guardian in Father's absence."

"The letter was confidential," replied Genevieve, after a moment's consideration. "I felt it my duty to destroy it as soon as read. I am no fool, Faith! I know the prince better than you do. I have had interviews and correspondence with him of which you know nothing. The fact is, I could have married him myself had I chosen, but I saw through him too quickly. He is a consummate hypocrite and flirt, who has imposed on your inexperience and credulity. He took it for granted you had the same income as I. Since he has found out you would bring him no dowry he has been content to spend the seven long months away from you. He

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refers in the letter to his poverty and his need of money as a barrier between you; and, if you ever hear from him again, I shall be much surprised."

Faith was too astonished and indignant for words. She stared at her sister, then turned in cold silence and left the room. Genevieve was a great stickler for the truth and would hardly fabricate the whole affair, so no doubt she had received a letter of some sort, but she was exaggerating or perverting its contents. Faith felt she must not be too credulous or too easily disturbed. This sort of thing was always happening in romances, and she must have sense and courage and believe that all would be cleared up somehow. But why, oh, why had he not written directly to herself? Of course, letters miscarried sometimes, or were delayed in the mails. She must remember that and have patience; but she knew that if she did not receive some word from him by to-morrow, she should feel very deeply hurt indeed.

A week and a day passed and no word came. Faith held herself bravely. No one should see that she had lost courage or confidence. A hurried note from Rupert expressing sympathy and asking if Solntsoff had given her any explanation which he might be allowed to use to contradict unpleasant rumors, only seemed to confirm what Genevieve had told her.

Meanwhile, her fellow-guests at the Pension seemed possessed, one and all, to add to her trouble. It was known that this schoolgirl, this mere child, was in love with a dissipated, undesirable Russian, and the good women believed they were doing Faith a kindness in opening her eyes to the evils of bad men's lives, especially those of foreign men. Poor Faith shrank from these unsought confidences but knew not how to repel them, since they seemed kindly meant. Anonymous letters of warning against international marriages came to her with every mail. Genevieve's friends went farther. Two of these three ladies were "ungathered roses" of the age when they speak of themselves, with an

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apologetic giggle, as "girls." The other was, indeed, married but content to have the ocean between herself and her husband. She spoke most discouragingly about marriage in general. Husbands were brutes, and wives down-trodden victims. Children were a terrible responsibility and expense, and a menace to the mother's health. Thank heaven she had none! She scorned Faith's idea that a woman should be ready to give her life for her child, as a man gave his for his country. The "Ungathered Roses" in their eagerness to appear content with their lot, also talked disparagingly of marriage as of a most unaccountable dispensation of the Almighty. They spoke shudderingly, with bated breath, yet with a certain fascinated eloquence of the unholy habits of men. Genevieve, too, felt it a stern duty to enlighten Faith upon the depravity of men and the unhappy lot of married women. The poor girl who, ten days before, had none but the sweetest and holiest ideals of matrimony and the vaguest general notions of what a life of dissipation meant, was shocked and overwhelmed by the revelations poured into her unwilling ears. Night after night she sobbed herself to a restless, broken sleep.

The evening of the tenth day Lady Bowen arrived and Faith went eagerly to seek counsel of her, but found her so fatigued from her journey that it seemed selfish to trouble her with the burdens of others. So after an affectionate greeting Faith left her and wandered away, anywhere, anywhere, only to escape from the gossiping tongues on the veranda. She found herself by the little Lutheran church, standing picturesquely on its terrace above the village. She turned toward it disconsolately, but its inhospitable door was locked until the coming Sunday, and she sighed for the ever open temples and shrines of Orthodox and Catholic lands. Of course God could hear her prayer anywhere, but her young heart yearned for the earthly tabernacles of the Heavenly Lamb.

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She crossed to a bench at the edge of the terrace and sitting down, leaned her arms on the parapet and gazed out over the lake. The sun was just sinking over the snowy horizon of the Jura; the soft spring twilight was already perceptibly longer. The summer would soon be here. She laid her head down wearily on her arms.

It was so hard to judge! Her heart called upon her loudly to have faith, to trust her lover all in all, to enter with courage into God's holy ordinance, hand in hand with the clean and upright man whom she loved, and who must sorely need her in his trouble. On the other side, these women of experience, so much older, so much wiser than herself, were telling her that her ideals were impossible, that all men were false and weak, and that she must believe the stories she heard against her lover because they were presumably true. And she, ignorant, inexperienced young schoolgirl, believed in him against the judgment of her elders, against all probability, against the voice of report, against his own strange silence!

Oh, if she could only see some one who would explain it all away and bring her back her "good Prince, the Courteous Prince, Fair-Sun!" If she could only once more believe in her old ideals! Were men no longer Christians? Were knights no more true? Was there none worthy to sit in the Siege Perilous?

A man came out onto the terrace from the forest path, a stout, florid man of middle age, his auburn hair and moustache streaked with gray. He was warm and was fanning himself with his hat, which action betrayed the fact that he was decidedly bald. He heard the sound of sobs and his big, compassionate heart was touched by the sight of a young girl's weary figure leaning against the parapet. But he was an experienced man, who knew that it was usually best to fight shy of females in apparent distress. A respectable married man and father of a large family has his own

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reputation to protect. It is not his office to comfort lonely young women in search of consolation. He turned away from the terrace and back toward the forest path.

But his kind heart reproached him. He was surely old enough and settled enough to be careless of gossip, and there was something familiar as well as appealing in the lonely, girlish figure. He turned back and walked toward the parapet. The girl started at the sound of steps.

"My God! Vyéra Kárllovna!" he exclaimed, and hurrying forward took her hands and pressed them warmly in his. He was shocked at her appearance.

"Dear Graf, Grigóri Sergévich," began Faith, then, drawing her hands away, began to sob anew.

"Come! Come! This will never do!" said the good Graf, sitting down beside her. "Do you need help? Can I do anything for you? Is it for Lyéff Petróvich's troubles that you are crying, my dear?"

"He doesn't write me any explanation," said Faith, wiping her eyes. "I have not had one little bit of a note from him since the trouble began."

"Do you need any explanation?" asked Alyónkin with a slight hardening of his tone, for he was jealous for his friend's sake. It was a poor, pitiful kind of love that could not believe in such a man and cling to him through good report and evil.

"No!" exclaimed Faith, with indignation. "I do not ask for a word for myself! But everybody says dreadful things and I have no answer to give. They think I am a fool to trust him."

Alyónkin patted her approvingly on the shoulder. "You must not be too upset by all the newspaper gossip," he explained, kindly. "It is hard for you to understand the venom with which the different political parties in Russia hate one another, but there is nothing personal in it. A man may be of irreproachable character; yet, if he is a conserva-

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tive, the liberals will call him corrupt and a reptile because he supports existing institutions; and, if he is a liberal, the conservatives will call him depraved and a rascal because they think his experiments would undermine the foundations of religion and order. Men who reach a high position at court are especially subject to all kinds of abuse from jealous intriguers and social climbers. You must not attach too serious a meaning to it all. For my part, I believe Lyóva is well out of it and will be thankful for his fall some day."

"But that isn't all," said Faith, hesitatingly. "He wrote my sister a letter. I am sure she misunderstands him, but she declares he says he is guilty and deserves the disgrace that has come to him."

"Lyéff Petróvich has written your sister!" exclaimed Alyónkin, in utter incredulity. He considered a moment and then said cautiously, "I, too, am sure that if he wrote your sister, she misunderstands his meaning. He knows his own defects of character and he may have admitted that he was at fault in some respect; but how can he say he is guilty when he was not dismissed on any charge of misconduct whatever?"

"She says the charges were too grave to publish, and it makes me so unhappy," sighed Faith.

"Of course it would! You long to be among those of us who love and understand him. If you could only come to us, dear, we should have comforted you long since. Lyéff Petróvich is greatly loved in our happy little household."

Faith looked up appealingly into the bluff, honest face. "You do seem happy! It is possible, isn't it?" she asked. "There can be happy marriages, can there not?"

"Happy marriages! Possible!" he exclaimed, wonderingly. "Little Vyéra, if you mean marriages free from every shadow of sorrow or discord, I will answer frankly that it is not possible. We are poor, faulty human beings and we live on earth and not in heaven. But if you mean marriages where two people love each other, do their duty by each other, are

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tenderly forbearing with each other's faults, cling to one another through storm and sunshine, love their children and delight in their education and companionship, and have many, many hours of exquisite happiness together, their occasional sorrows, cares or misunderstandings only serving to draw them hand in hand to the throne of God — then, I say, such happy marriages are possible. And, thank God, there are thousands and hundreds of thousands of such happy, Christian homes through the length and breadth of beloved Russia."

But Faith choked up and began to cry again, hiding her face in her hands.

"I don't get to the bottom of your trouble," said the puzzled count. "I wish you could come to my wife and let her take you to her motherly heart. You need a good woman's help, poor little dove! I will talk it over with Anna Nikoláyevna, and she may think of something. Can you see me to-morrow, if I call?"

"I don't know where we could talk freely," sighed Faith. "My sister would be in our sitting-room, and there are always people in the public reception-room. There is Lady Bowen, do you know her?"

"Very slightly, but enough to call, if she is your friend."

"Oh, I shouldn't be afraid to say anything before her. I am to take tea with her in her room every afternoon between four and five, and there is never any one else."

"I will be there to-morrow at four," promised Alyónkin, "and Anna Nikoláyevna will surely have thought of something to help and cheer you."

"You are very good to me. I am sorry to be so silly."

"You are not silly. You are in a very difficult position and you are very young to cope with such trouble. But the end will crown all."

That night Faith slept soundly and dreamlessly, and woke up greatly refreshed. Though the morning's mail

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brought her no letter yet she felt a sense of comfort and security. She did not know what Grigóri Sergévich would have to say to her, what message Anna Nikoláyevna would send, but she felt sure they would find a way to help her.

After luncheon she ran up to her room. It lacked two hours yet of the appointed time, but she had picked out the prettiest frock from her new wardrobe when Genevieve entered from their sitting-room. She eyed the dainty dress suspiciously.

"Where are you going that you wear your best things?" she asked.

"Only to afternoon tea as usual with Lady Bowen," replied Faith, trying to look innocent but feeling desperately guilty.

"It hardly seems worth while to muss it just for her," observed Genevieve.

Faith choked. She must tell the whole truth or it would strangle her.

"Graf Alyónkin will be there to-day," she said as quietly as she could.

"I knew you were trying to deceive me," cried Genevieve, sternly. "Pray, how long has this been going on, Miss? See how you have deteriorated among your fine foreign friends! It is high time to take you away. I have cabled Father that we shall return next week by the Cunard steamer from Genoa. In America you used to have some sense of honor. Now you think nothing of lying to me, of having clandestine meetings with dissipated foreigners under pretense of 'going to tea as usual with Lady Bowen!' How do I know but that you expect to meet your unworthy lover there?"

Faith was scarlet, but she made no reply.

"Answer me!" cried Genevieve, stamping her foot. "Will Solntsoff be there?"

"No, he will not!" said Faith, coldly. "You know as

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well as I do that he is in Russia, and that I have not heard from him for two weeks."

"I know that he is not in Russia!" sneered her sister. "And I expect you know it even better than I. What messages is he sending to you through Count Alyónkin and Lady Bowen?"

"If you know that he is not in Russia, then where is he?" asked Faith, slowly. "You seem to know more about him than I do."

"I know — er — from the papers, that he has fled from St. Petersburg. An innocent man would have stayed on the spot to face his false accusers, but he ran away and joined his uncle at Aix-les-Bains a week ago or more. Nothing further was needed to confirm his guilt."

"He has been at Aix-les-Bains a week!" thought Faith, and she grew very grave. Aix was only four hours distant and he had not been to see her, had not even telegraphed her his change of address.

"Of course, he would wish to stay on the spot," she said aloud, loyally, "but it is natural that he should go to his uncle. Prince Solntsoff's devotion to his uncle has always been one of the beautiful traits of his character. Prince Kliázemski has been like a father to him. He is a saintly old man and Lyéff owes him everything."

"So I understand," said Genevieve meaningly.

Faith gave an indignant little cry. "Oh, you know I do not mean it in that sense. I spoke of a debt of love and loyalty and gratitude. He has never received a single penny from his uncle."

"Who is your authority for that statement?" asked Genevieve, pointedly. Faith hesitated. Of course, no one had spoken to her of his affairs but Solntsoff himself, the very man whose integrity and disinterestedness were in question.

"No doubt he told you this, and many other nice things that you are fool enough to believe," laughed Genevieve

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tauntingly, and, going out, slammed the door after her. Faith waited till the door was tightly closed, and then, grown white and trembling from agitation, threw herself on the bed.

"She doesn't know him as I do," she confided to the friendly bosom of the pillow. "She has not felt the strength of his faith and his principles. How could she know? She has not talked heart to heart with Lyóva; she has not read his letters to me ——"

Then with a little stab of agony came the thought that there had been no letters of late; that Genevieve was hardly to be blamed for misconstruing his actions, when she herself wondered at them and was at a loss to account for them. "If they could prove beyond a doubt that Lyóva was dissipated it would kill my love forever!" she sobbed. "He would not be the man I thought, but a stranger, a hypocrite, a deceiver, for whom I care nothing!" She tried to recall the man she had trusted, to see before her the tall, shapely figure, the kind, strong face, the pleasant, winsome eyes, the sunny, tender smile. "If only I could see him!" she sighed, for no pictures would come before her but the repulsive ones that had been suggested to her of late. "If only I could see him once again, only look once into his eyes, and feel the clasp of his hand!"

She rose and went toward her boxes. "I will read his dear letters once more to fortify my faith," she said, smilingly, and drawing the key from her purse, unlocked the trunk, lifted the tray and put her hand into the partition where she kept her papers. The packet of letters in a silken cover should have been in front, but her hand slipped into a vacant place. With a nervous cry of alarm she hastily rummaged over the trays, searched in every corner, then sat down feeling faint and desolate. She recalled that Genevieve kept the duplicate keys of all her boxes, "for safety," she had said.

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"My letters, my letters!" repeated Faith, in a dull, confused way. "His letters to me! They are mine, they are sacred, no one else should touch them! Oh, Rupert, you were right when you warned me that the best-kept letters might go astray!"

At first she was dazed. Then her anger flashed up hot and strong, and she sprang to the door leading into their sitting-room. It was locked! There was no other entrance to her room, no bell, no communication with the outside world save through this sitting-room. And Genevieve had locked her in!

Faith smiled grimly. Her lips closed in an obstinate line, and she walked to the window. Their rooms were on the second sleeping floor. The height of the first floor, some ten feet, lay between the window and the sloping roof of the veranda below, which ran around three sides of the large, shady garden. She made a rapid calculation of the position of Lady Bowen's rooms. They were on the first sleeping floor, at right angles to their own.

She turned back and began to put on her tennis-skirt and her rubber-soled tennis shoes. "They will keep me from slipping," she thought. "I suppose it will startle these good spinsters and dowagers to see me clambering over our decorous roofs, but I am a desperate girl, and must adopt desperate measures." She opened the window softly, and climbed out on to the sill.

It was the hour of the afternoon siesta. The garden below was empty, while, on the sleeping floors, the venetian blinds were drawn at almost every window. It was certainly a favorable hour for her adventurous roof-trip.

Such a trip was not without danger and, conscious of its seriousness, Faith made the sign of the cross over herself, as she had seen the Orthodox do in church. Then, holding to the sill with both hands, she let herself down over the

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edge. The slope of the roof below looked perilously steep and slippery from this point of view, but it was too late to climb back now.

"It's an even chance!" she gasped. "Cheer up, Faith! You've taken many a long jump before. This is for love and liberty. One, two, three ——"

CHAPTER XIII

A TRIAL OF FAITH

"Fling the gates wide open, fling —
Who's the guest the coursers bring?
Who? 'Tis thou, my love!
Svetlána, tell me now! the dream,
Is the dream forgot?
Youths may faithful be who seem —
Faithless — may they not?
Hope and trust should guide our way,
Maid! there's no mistaking;
Miseries are only dreams,
Joy — is the awaking!"
— *Zhukovski's "Svetlána."*

LADY BOWEN sat in her cool, well-shaded boudoir. The windows were open, but the venetian blinds were drawn to keep out the direct rays of the afternoon sun. The light in the sheltered room was somewhat dim, but it could be seen that a gentleman was with her and that they were consulting together earnestly.

"It is a coincidence," she was saying, "that the countess and I should have thought of the same remedy at the same moment. I have not been twenty-four hours in the Pension, but I can form an idea already of what the poor child has had to go through. I would suggest —"

A sudden rattling at the venetian blinds startled them; then a low, hurried voice was heard calling from without.

"Oh, Lady Bowen, please pull up the blinds and let me in as soon as you can! It is I, Faith, out here on the veranda roof."

Both occupants of the room sprang to their feet in astonishment. Then the gentleman stepped quickly to the window,

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and, drawing up the blinds, held out his hand to assist the crouching figure.

Looking into the room from the dazzling glare without, Faith could not discern the figures within, could see nothing but darkness. She sat on the ledge of the window, trembling, and half-crying.

"In heaven's name, Faith!" cried Lady Bowen. "What does this mean?"

"It means that she locked me in my room so that I should not come to you," sobbed the excited and indignant girl. "She has been saying the most awful things about Prince Solntsoff till I felt as if I could strangle her! I have tried to obey her; I have tried to be loyal to her; but I cannot stand it any longer. I have run away! I climbed out the window and dropped down to the roof and crawled round here. I should have broken my neck, if it hadn't been for my tennis shoes. Lady Bowen, if you won't take me in, I shall go somewhere and earn my living. I'll work my fingers to the bone till he is ready for me ——"

Suddenly she felt herself drawn into the room, felt a pair of strong arms lift her completely off her feet and up, up, till her head was on a level with a fair head that she could see in the dim light, and her dark eyes looked full into the blue eyes that she loved. With one glad cry, her arms went round the tall man's neck, and he was holding her to his breast as if he could never let her go.

For a moment neither spoke. It seemed to Faith as if everything had all at once grown peaceful and still, that this was a good world to live in, that a kind Heavenly Father was guiding her, and that nothing mattered, but just to be loving and true. She pressed the fair, manly head close to her cheek and ran her fingers softly through the waving, sunny hair.

"The good Prince," she murmured, happily and tenderly. "My Prince Fair-Sun!" Then she pushed herself a little

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away from him and he put her down gently, still holding her closely to his side.

"I do not know how or why you came," she went on, low and joyously. "I only know that you appear when I most need you. Now that I have you I can almost forgive Genevieve! I do not hate her any more; I have no more enemies. With you here I can forget that any one was ever unkind."

"Then they were right? I did not come for nothing."

"Who was right? Who is 'they'?" she asked drawing away from him, for she suddenly remembered Lady Bowen's presence and became greatly confused. What would Lady Bowen think of her impulsive familiarity and foolish fondness? But that lady seemed to take it as a matter of course, patted her affectionately on the shoulder, asked why she had not on her pretty blue frock, and then they sat down at discreet distances one from another.

"Lady Bowen and Grigóri Sergévich were each and separately inspired to write me last evening," explained Solntsoff. "Their notes, saying that my Little Comrade needed me, were delivered to me at the same moment this morning, just twenty minutes before the train was due to start. I must give the short notice as my excuse for appearing before you in this unkempt condition," he added, with some embarrassment. "I have already made my apologies to Lady Bowen. I had been up practically all night for three successive nights, and had been too sleepy and tired to attempt to shave or dress till the letters came; then it was a mad rush for the train."

Faith's eyes had now become accustomed to the dim light of the room, and she glanced shyly toward her lover. As she looked at him her heart sank in doubt and dismay. Never had he appeared to so little advantage. Not only was he travel-stained and sadly in need of a shave, but his eyes were bloodshot and dull, there were dark circles under them

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and the lids were heavy and swollen. His skin was sallow, his lips were colorless, and he looked weary, careless, even slovenly. Such was the way, Genevieve had said, that men looked after a night's debauch, and Faith felt her heart grow heavy as lead within her. What if Genevieve were right? What if she, an ignorant, inexperienced schoolgirl, had been deceived in her lover, and he were no better than those men whose evil habits her sister and her sister's friends had so vividly described? She turned faint and sick with a sudden feeling of repulsion.

"You see, little Marplot," said Lady Bowen, cheerily, "we did not expect you for another two hours yet. The prince hurried here direct from the train to arrange with me about meeting you, and was on the point of leaving for Graf Alyónkin's villa to make himself fine for you, when you dropped down from the heavens and flew in at the window in this unexpected fashion."

Solntsoff was watching Faith narrowly. He bent forward and smiled inquiringly into her troubled eyes, but there was not the usual shy response in her face. She looked white and distressed. Nor was his smile the spontaneously winning, tender, merry thing that used to set her young heart palpitating. It was forced and artificial, and she was quick to note the difference. Her fears increased.

"Oh, what shall I do?" thought the frightened girl. "I suddenly feel that I shrink from him, that I do not love him any more! Oh, what has happened? It is only a moment since I was so happy in his arms, that I was calling him endearing, trusting names; and now all at once it seems like a horrible mistake. How can I leave everything to go off alone to a strange land with a man like that, to belong to him entirely and forever, no matter what he does! Oh, if he is a dissipated man I cannot love him, I cannot belong to him! Yet he has my solemn promise, my 'promise true.' Oh, what, what shall I do?"

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She could hear their voices; and though neither addressed her directly yet she was conscious that they were discussing the very things she had wished to hear about, his dismissal from office and his plans for the future. She tried miserably to gather herself together. How had he dared present himself looking as he did? Was it possible that, as Genevieve had suggested, he wished her to break the engagement, and had come to-day with the intention of letting her see him at his worst? She flushed hotly as she remembered her impulsive greeting to him. But, at any rate, he had come at the special request of her friends and she must treat him with courtesy and dignity.

"I hope your uncle is well?" she said, politely. "I hope Natália Petrónva and the children are all well?"

He turned toward her gravely, and his voice was a little unsteady as he replied, "We fear that my poor uncle is dying! Yesterday it seemed as if he could not last through the night, but he rallies wonderfully during the day. His two daughters have come on, and we have sat up with him three nights, hourly expecting the end. We are all nearly exhausted with anxiety, fatigue, and lack of sleep."

Faith watched him with eager, wide-open eyes. She should have grieved for the old prince, to whom she was sincerely attached, yet it seemed as if the light of gladness shone in her face. Then she said, almost reproachfully, "But how could you leave his dying bed? How could you leave those poor women alone in their trouble?"

He returned her look with a certain grave surprise. "I heard that you, too, were in deep trouble," he replied, very simply. "I had to choose between you. Holy Scripture tells us that a man shall leave even father and mother to cling to his wife. You are my promised wife, so I came to you."

Faith's head drooped and the tears rushed to her eyes. He had spoken with great simplicity, but what seemed

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simple to him was wonderful to her. He had made no protestations of love or devotion. He spoke only as a conscientious Christian gentleman, who would always do his duty faithfully by her, who would be true to her at whatever sacrifice. Such a man was not of those who waste their lives in dissipation and infidelities! Genevieve, cynical and irreligious, might not comprehend this type, but the childish heart of her sister had truer intuitions. She moved her chair closer to him and her hand stole into his.

"My trouble was as nothing in comparison to yours," she said, gently. "Had you let me know, I would have come to console you and watch with you."

He clasped her hand closely within his, then, bending forward, put his other hand under her chin and turned her face upward toward him. It was an eager, sincere face that looked into his with fond, trusting eyes. He gave a curious half-smile as he recalled the distressed face of a moment ago.

"I felt sure of that," he said, quietly. "I did not for one instant suppose that my Vyéra would fail me in my hour of need, were she free to respond. But I had written you many times, and telegraphed you twice. Did you not know, Vyéra, that I must have done so?"

And all at once she knew! What a fool she had been to doubt the lover who had always been devoted to her, and not suspect the sister who was so often unkind!

"Oh, oh!" she cried out bitterly, with a little, choking sob. "I take back what I said about forgiving Genevieve! I never, never can!"

"But why did you not write me, simply and frankly, to ask what was wrong?" he inquired, reproachfully.

"Oh, I longed and longed to do so, but felt that I must not," explained Faith, "for Rupert had said I was only to write you in reply to your letters to me as each one came, and I had given him my word."

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"Poor little *Casabianca!*" said Lady Bowen, smiling affectionately at her. Then she turned away from them and busied herself at her desk, that the two might talk more freely together.

Solntsoff bent earnestly toward Faith. "Do not grieve over what has passed, Vyérochka!" he said. "You have been through a severe test of your faith in me, you have been deeply pained by your sister's action, you have had many distressing experiences. But the trial is over now, and you have gained greatly by it. You are a woman, where you were a child. You understand the world, and you understand me, better than you possibly could before. This understanding will not separate us but only draw us together in closer, friendlier comprehension. Let us thank God for that, and try to forgive your sister."

And Faith did indeed thank God with all her heart! To be sitting hand in hand with her lover, to feel that he was a clean, upright, God-fearing man, at whose side she could walk confidently, knowing that the path he took would lead her, as Grigóri Sergévich had said, ever closer and closer to the throne of God — this loving faith, this happy confidence was in itself a foretaste of heaven. Every beat of her young heart was a song of gratitude.

Then, suddenly, Faith fell from heaven! For, looking up in tenderest response at her lover, she saw him lean back in his chair, lift his hand to his moustache and — yawn! For an instant her mortification was intense. Then she remembered that he must, indeed, be mortally weary and sleepy after three wakeful, painful, anxious nights. And to think that he had put aside his fatigue and grief and, leaving his dear ones in the shadow of death, had come all this way to her in her little hour of trial!

A wave of almost maternal tenderness flooded her heart. She sprang up and stood by his side, leaning over him affectionately and caressingly.

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"You need a good rest far more than you need my sympathy," she said, soothingly. "I shall not let you talk any more till you come back to tea at five o'clock. You must now go and get some sleep."

"I could not have slept till I was sure all was right with you," he averred, blinking at her drowsily and contentedly. Apparently he did not in the least object to being petted and made much of, in spite of being so big and strong and so thoughtful of others. He rose. "And you, too, should rest after your exertions, unless," he suggested teasingly, "it is a part of your accustomed daily exercise to drop from windows and clamber over veranda roofs!"

But Faith fairly pushed him out of the room. Then she leaned a moment against the door with drooping head. How shamed she felt to have so doubted him, to have so misread his weariness and grief!

"Lady Bowen," she said, solemnly, "if ever again I should be so foolish, so insane, as to doubt that man's faithfulness and goodness for one single instant, then kindly just remind me of this day!"

"It is really extraordinary how he loves you," remarked Lady Bowen, watching Solntsoff from the window.

"It is extraordinary," agreed Faith, humbly. "I cannot understand it at all in so clever a man. Why should he choose me? It seems like very poor judgment!"

"It is not good for man to be alone," quoted Lady Bowen, softly patting her shoulder. "Knyáz Solntsoff is a man of strong character and intellect, who, in many ways, is sufficient unto himself; and yet, like many a strong and clever man before him, he feels the craving for something to supplement his personality. Your individuality appeals to him as no other woman's has done, not because you are cleverer or better, but because you have qualities that respond to his special needs; and therefore he craves you, just you, and no one else."

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"I 'fill a long-felt want,'" laughed Faith, but the tears lay very near the laughter. "It is a comforting thought."

Punctually at five o'clock Solntsoff returned to Lady Bowen's sitting-room, accompanied by Alyónkin. Refreshed by an hour's sound sleep, a bath, a shave and fresh linen, but best of all, cheered by a despatch saying that his uncle had taken a turn for the better, the prince was a different being; and Faith surveyed him in a glow of pride and joy.

"That other man was a great trial to your constancy and trust, was he not, my poor Vyérotchka?" he whispered, slyly.

But Faith would not deign to answer such a question.

Alyónkin greeted Faith, his good-humored countenance wreathed in smiles.

"Well, well?" he inquired. "How did my wife's prescription work?"

"Tell dear Anna Nikoláyevna," said Faith, earnestly, "that when Lyéff Petróvich is with me, the troubles and wrongs of the world are as nothing, for there is only he and I, we two alone, with the good God watching over us, and everything holy and beautiful."

"That is right! That is right! That is as it should be!" said the bluff, kindly man, pressing her hands in his own, his eyes moist with feeling. "But, there! Lyóva needed the prescription badly, too! Even his vindication was nothing when he did not hear from you."

"His vindication?" asked Faith, wonderingly.

Alyónkin stared at her, then stared at Solntsoff. "You do not mean that he has not yet told you?" he exclaimed, loudly.

Lyéff Petróvich smiled tenderly at Faith. "She did not ask, and I was in no haste to explain," he said. "I took a mean, selfish delight in seeing that she could be happy with me even under a cloud. Eh, Vyérotchka?"

"If you are under a cloud I am happy to be there with

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you, but I am not happy that there should be a cloud," she explained.

"Of course not!" burst in Alyónkin, "but I see I shall have to do the telling, for you two will talk sentiment for an hour, if some sensible person does not come to the rescue. Vyéra Kárlovna, the Gosudár was only relieving Lyéff Petróvich from his duties at the Foreign Office to transfer him to a higher post in the Private Chancery, making him a D. S. S.* His release from one office and promotion to the other by Imperial Oukáz were officially gazetted together in yesterday's journals. But you know our Russian calendar is thirteen days behind that of Western Europe? Some one in the Foreign Office blundered, probably with malice, in sending Lyóva the private notification of his release on the Western, instead of on the Russian date; the newspapers got hold of it through some leakage in the department, and there has been all this ado about nothing."

But when she turned to congratulate him on his promotion, to her surprise Solntsoff looked very grave. When they had had tea, he asked her to accompany him to the telegraph bureau to send a message to his sister that he would return to Aix by the night train.

"What would you think, Faith," he asked, as they walked through the hall and down the stairway together, "if I did not accept the promotion?"

"Not accept!" she exclaimed. Then she was silent, thinking very hard, and he, too, was silent, looking intently at nothing. At last she said, "I should know that you must have a good reason for refusing, but you must not feel in the least obliged to tell me your reason. Your public life, your government life, does not belong to me. You must decide things there just as you did before you knew of my existence."

"My reasons are not state secrets. They are purely

* Dyeistvítelny Státsky Sovyétnik, *i.e.*, Actual State-Councillor.

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personal, and I am glad to share them with you," he said, frankly. "Though I have been promoted, yet there is no doubt that I was transferred because my manner of conducting affairs was not acceptable to my associates. But I should carry the same methods, the same personal characteristics, into the new branch of the service and there would soon be the same friction. It seems to me I should serve more loyally by not subjecting my superiors to fresh embarrassments on my account, but by remaining out of office and working out my aims and ideals, as I intended eventually to do, by my pen only, and on my sole personal responsibility. Even if I accepted the honors it would be to resign them in another year, and that seems too much like taking them only for my vindication and personal convenience. What do you think?"

"I fear you are scrupulous," she said, "and I know you are proud, but I believe you are right. I should like to see you honored and vindicated; but, still more, I should like to see you with your conscience at ease, happy in your life work, doing what you feel you can best do, and in the way you feel you can best do it."

"It is such a comfort to me that you are so sensible," he said, tenderly.

"I might not be so sensible, if you were not so trustworthy," she replied, affectionately.

And so they were well content with one another.

As they started to cross the garden Faith drew back. It was the hour for afternoon tea, and the numerous tables scattered about the veranda and the shady lawn were occupied by the guests, chiefly feminine, of the Pension.

"I am not fit to be seen in this costume," she said. "I will stop here."

"You look very fit to me," he replied, gallantly; but seeing how shyly she hung back, he left her and crossed the garden alone.

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Faith's eyes followed him with eager gaze. How proud she was of the tall figure, the straight, shapely limbs, the light, easy movements, the simple, unassuming grace of bearing so attractive in the big, stately man. She could hear the murmur of interest and admiration that ran from table to table as he passed. Evidently his identity was not known.

"Who is it? Who can it be? Very gentlemanlike, distinguished bearing! Very strong, refined, clever face! Such a charming manner! Probably some English aristocrat," were some of the comments she overheard.

And among these now paying tribute to his refined and manly personality were many who, never having seen him, had not hesitated to denounce him to her, had dared to try and destroy her peace of mind and break up a future happy home!

As he threaded his way with gentle, unaffected courtesy in and out among the crowded tables, the "Ungathered Roses" sat up very straight and assumed their brightest smiles; the grass-widow moved her chair forward, obliging him to exchange words of apology in passing; a group of young women chattered vivaciously and laughed giddily as he approached, an English beauty looked up at him with languorous glance, and two demure German spinsters blushed, simpered and looked down. He was making a sensation! Faith giggled delightedly.

As he stepped up from the lawn on to the opposite veranda he turned and, seeing Faith standing in the shelter of the distant doorway, took off his hat in farewell salute to her before entering the office. All eyes were instantly directed toward her. It was a little moment of triumph which she felt she deserved after what she had passed through. She was sorry she had not on her best frock; she must look so painfully young and childish in the short skirt and sailor

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blouse of her tennis costume. She heard a low voice calling excitedly to her. It was the eldest "Rose."

"Oh, Miss Faith! Do tell us! Is that your brother? What a perfectly charming gentleman! We shall all hope for the pleasure of meeting him."

"My brother? Oh, no, that is not Rupert!" said Faith, who was enjoying herself immensely. "But he is a friend of my brother's and a still better friend of mine; and I want to claim your good wishes for us both!" and she held out her hand cordially.

"Oh! er — is it — er —" faltered the "Rose," slowly extending a hand that had suddenly grown somewhat limp.

"Yes, it is my fiancé, Prince Solntsoff of St. Petersburg," said Faith, giving a hearty grasp and shake to the limp member. "He is, indeed, a splendid man, and I should like you all to meet him and know just how fine he is, and that I have every reason to be a very happy girl." She dropped the unwilling hand and entered the house.

"Is there anything meaner than national prejudice?" she asked herself, hotly. "Now that they know he is a Russian they will forget that they instinctively admired him and will continue to believe the worst." Her little triumph was a sorry failure, after all!

But the news of Solntsoff's vindication and promotion to high favor was spread diligently about the Pension by Lady Bowen and gazetted in the evening papers, so that when, two hours later, she and Faith came down to the carriage to drive to the Alyónkins' villa, they found several fellow-guests waiting to bid them good-bye. The youngest "Rose" came up to Faith and slipped a package into her hand.

"We are so glad for you that everything has turned out right," she whispered. "I am so sorry if anything we said added to your trouble. Of course, we had never seen Prince Solntsoff; we were only warning you because we

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had known of so many unhappy affairs. But since we have seen him, we feel sure that he is a very exceptional man and that you will be very happy. My sister and I hope that you will think this little frame worthy to hold his picture and that you will remember you have our very best wishes."

Faith was touched. She drew the "Rose" toward her and kissed her affectionately, assuring her that she would use the frame with pleasure for the purpose designed. Then the others gathered about her and seemed truly sorry to have her leave.

"I suppose they meant well," sighed Faith. "I suspect it is true that there are not many men like Lyéff Petróvich, so clever and so good," and she forgave them from the bottom of her heart.

They made a merry party at the villa that evening. "I will not ask Genevieve's permission to enter my room, if I live in tennis clothes till I die," Faith had said, grimly. So she came to them just as she was. But Grafinia Alyónkina had decked her out in a black lace evening gown with square neck and train, which, with her hair coiled on top of her head, made her look very grown-up and dignified. They drank to the health of their dear ones, absent and present, and to the confusion of their enemies, while two telegrams from Rupert Milbanke enlivened the occasion.

"Mine is very characteristic," said Solntsoff, amused. "I wrote him two days ago in distress at not hearing from Faith. This is his explanation. 'Cat is tormenting mouse. Dog will proceed to worry cat.'"

"Here is mine," said Lady Bowen. "'Do not let Faith submit to injustice. If convenient, kindly remove her at once. I arrive to-morrow to settle details.' The cat had better be on the watch!"

"To-morrow!" cried Faith. "Oh, what trouble I give to every one!"

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The next morning saw Milbanke arrive in fine fettle for a fight.

"Oh, Rupert, what did you think when I could not give you any satisfaction about Lyéff Petróvich?" asked Faith, eagerly.

"I thought there would be the deuce to pay with your sister!" he replied, dryly.

"I mean, did you credit the rumors?"

"Well, no, Puss! I did not lie awake nights worrying about such a steady old Rock of Gibraltar as Solntsoff! If I had not known him to be trustworthy, do you think I would let him have you? But don't detain me. I can't rest till I have a bout with that sister of yours! Faith, you don't know half yet. The Stourdzas have been telling me some things they learned from Solntsoff's sister; of how Miss Genevieve tried to poison their minds against the whole Ludlow clan, when at Yalta. Wait till I tell his Lordship! I am afraid there will be some very unecclesiastical doings and sayings! But I must have the first round."

"I venture to predict that you will come out second best," laughed Faith.

Genevieve Brandon chose to receive Mr. Milbanke in the public reception room instead of in her own little parlor. She looked very gentle, very appealingly and delicately fair, a veritable Patient Griselidis.

"I feel perfectly justified in having taken the measures I did," she said in languid tones, with the air of one who had suffered much for justice's sake. "My conscience is absolutely clear. No one knows that child as I do. You, Mr. Milbanke, have only had occasional visits with her at intervals of years. Bishop Ludlow has seen so little of his niece that if he met her unexpectedly in the street he would not know her, while I have taken a mother's place to her for many years."

"Excuse me, Miss Brandon," he interrupted. "I am not

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here to discuss Faith's character. I simply ask you to restore the letters which my sister had permission from me and from her uncle to receive, and which have been intercepted and kept from her."

"Nothing was intercepted and kept from her, Mr. Milbanke," said Genevieve, languidly but firmly, "until the uncle who had permitted the correspondence wrote to warn me against Prince Solntsoff, giving me full power to act as seemed best. The mail was always delivered to me as head of the family, and day after day I gave Faith her letters unopened. But Bishop Ludlow had laid a responsibility upon me that I could not avoid, and I did what I felt he would have done had he been on the spot, — I examined one of the prince's letters. What I read shocked me beyond measure, and convinced me that it was my duty to examine and, if necessary, to withhold all future letters."

"You have made a serious charge against Solntsoff's honor," said Milbanke, gravely. "If you will show me his letters and I find that he has not justified my faith in him, I will apologize to you most sincerely, and at once change my attitude toward him."

"Oh!" said Genevieve, slowly. "Then you claim the same right that I do to examine her letters?"

"Faith has expressed her entire willingness to have me do so; and Solntsoff is most desirous I should, as his honor is questioned."

"I think," and Genevieve measured her words carefully, "that when the prince expressed a desire to have you examine his letters he was quite aware of the fact that you could not do so, as they have been destroyed. Faith, at least, knew I had destroyed the first and most incriminating one."

Milbanke grew very red. "I regret you did not tell me this at once and cut short a painful interview. You must see, Miss Brandon, that in destroying the letters you have

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also destroyed the only proof you have to give of their character in justification of your withholding them."

"You mean," said Genevieve, "that it becomes a question of veracity between Prince Solntsoff and myself? I was aware of that, but I also knew the importance of keeping Faith from being contaminated by them. A girl who would defy my authority, climb out of a window to the scandal of the entire Pension, and have clandestine meetings with her lover in the room of a comparative stranger, would hesitate at nothing to possess herself of those letters, did she believe them to be in existence. I protected her rather than justify myself."

"Miss Brandon," said Milbanke, coldly. "We understand each other. You know the truth about Faith as well as I know it. I did not come here to insult you or to hear her insulted. I came to claim the letters. You tell me they are destroyed. Therefore, they can never be produced to justify either side. It only remains for me to send for Faith's boxes. Her home from henceforth will be with me. In the meanwhile, Prince Solntsoff's promotion must effectually silence his calumniators."

"I understand," drawled Genevieve, "that there is much to be hushed up. No doubt this promotion is the easiest way to procure the desired silence."

If Milbanke was red before, he was now white with rage. "Damn that woman!" he thought. "How could Faith keep from choking her?" He rose to his feet, and Genevieve rose also, and bowed haughtily.

"I think there is nothing further to be said, Mr. Milbanke, except that I give up my rooms at noon, and Faith's boxes will be left there at your disposal. I wash my hands of all further responsibility about her, and am returning to America to devote myself to my father. I only hope my fears for her may never be realized."

She bowed again.

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Milbanke also bowed, and left the room. His teeth were clinched, and he had an uncomfortable feeling that he had indeed come out second best. "Never shall Faith get into the clutches of that fiend incarnate again!" he growled.

Genevieve watched the slim, well-groomed figure till out of sight. "To think," she mused, "that I came near marrying that puppy!"

CHAPTER XIV

HIS LIFE'S RELATIONS

"The religious music of the Russians is the only one that expresses any true piety. Its gravity, unction and sweetness are beyond question. If a religious music truly Christian ever existed, the Russians have inherited it."

— *Vailhé.*

"I wish you well through all the acts of life,
And life's relations — wedlock not the least!"

— *E. B. Browning.*

"*St. Petersburg, Dec. 26 (JAN. 8).*

"*Bolshaya. Mórskaya, No.—*

"MR. BRANDON LUDLOW,
"Harvard University.

"DEAR BRANDY:

"Am I not lucky to have two Christmases this year? The first one I spent with Rupert and his darling boys in his dear little house in Brussels, where I have been ever since we left Montreux. Oh, how happy we were together! though I could see sometimes that it made poor Rupert wince to have me taking Amy's place. I left Brussels right after Christmas, marshaled by a prim lady's maid, of whom I stand dreadfully in awe. We came round by way of Moscow, where Countess Chernyatina met us, for Lyéff wanted me to see that wonderful city, which he says is the heart and the brains of Russia.

"Now I am having my second Christmas, by the Russian calendar, in the city of Peter the Great, where I and my 'suite' are duly established in the superb Kliázemski palace. The dear old prince has recovered his strength wonderfully, and is a most delightful host. He seems so happy in his home, with his favorite books and chairs about him, and old friends dropping in at all hours for a chat and a cup of tea.

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"But first I had a week in the country at Shumárovo, the estate of Prince Kliázemski's eldest daughter. It is a big, luxurious chateau about halfway between Moscow and St. Petersburg. The country is flat, but the forests and fields and a lake make it very diversified and pretty. They have a large peasant tenantry, and the farms and cottages look very prosperous and clean. Lyéff came down for the week-end with some other cousins and friends. The family lead very much the life of English country gentry, except for more winter sports, riding, shooting, tennis, skating and sledging, and much dining and visiting with neighbors, games, dancing, singing round the big fires, late suppers, etc. They interest themselves a great deal in the peasantry, the village school, the church and the hospital. And all are so delightfully democratic, the peasants calling the family by their Christian names without any handle, and the family on their side so courteous, and knowing all about the peasants' smallest interests. I am beginning to love Russia already.

You are so fond of sports and athletics, I wish you could see Lyéff fencing, and riding and boxing with his cousins and their friends. He turns out to be a fine swordsman and a splendid horseman, skates and dances well and can swim, row, shoot, wrestle, and I don't know what else besides! I admit it was a surprise to me. I asked him why he never talked about athletics, and he said that these things were the usual accomplishments of a gentleman, a part of his regular education, and that they took them as a matter of course, as mere exercise and recreation.

"But St. Petersburg itself! I have only been here a few days and I am overwhelmed with all there is to see and do. Christmas is in full swing, the magnificent churches thronged, the streets brilliant and merry with the holiday crowds, and bright with uniforms and the costumes of different nationalities. The gay social season begins as soon as the religious festivities are over; but I do not expect to go to balls, although I wear my dresses long now and do my hair up, for am I not seventeen and a half and betrothed? However, I am having a very jolly time, for the old prince has shoals of nephews and nieces and grandchildren, and all are so pleasant and merry. There is nothing stiff about the life here, all are so unaffectedly cordial and jovial, and, in spite of the grandeur of the pal-

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ace and the luxurious surroundings, everything is simple. People drop in at any hour, are always welcome, and never seem to expect anything but tea. They talk their heads off, politics, literature, the drama; they devour reviews and magazines, discuss them endlessly and, for the most part, wittily and with startling frankness. Many that come are celebrities. The young people get up all sorts of impromptu entertainments in the evenings: charades, tableaux, music and fancy dances, and yesterday the young officers gave an exhibition of wonderful horsemanship at the riding-school of the Chevaliers Gardes.

"How I wish uncle could be here for the Christmas and Epiphany ceremonies! I never dreamed there could be such heavenly music on this sinful earth. It seems like heaven, too, to see so many external evidences of religion on every hand, the street shrines, the processions, the deep reverence of the people, high and low; religious emblems prominent in every room, whether palace or hovel. Fancy walking on Fifth Avenue or Beacon Street with a dashing society fellow, and having him suddenly take off his hat and bow almost to the ground; you look up and see that you are passing before a picture of the '*Ecce Homo*'! Oh, one cannot forget God in such surroundings.

"I have seen little of the city but the outside yet, as we have been taken up with the family merry-makings and the religious ceremonials. We had a big Christmas-tree last night here at the palace, all the relatives young and old, the servants and their families, and the children of the employees and tradespeople, about one hundred and fifty in all, in the big ballroom. The priest, attended by deacons and choristers, came to sing the gospels and bless everything in sight. I don't know what Russians' spines are made of! They stand and stand for hours through these long ceremonies, for only the old and the sick are permitted to sit in church. Pews would shock them beyond all measure. Even in the palace, after we were tired out trimming the tree and tying bundles, there was half an hour more of standing for the gospels and blessings. Nobody seemed to mind it but my, as yet, un-Orthodox self. Their 'true-worshipping' muscles are accustomed to it. After the piety was over the democratic jollity began, the presents were distributed, there was singing and dancing and drinking healths and a good

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supper, with everybody jovial and happy. It was the merriest Christmas I ever knew."

Indeed, Faith had never before been so much thrown with young people of her own age, and in working gayly together at the Christmas-tree she had become delightfully intimate with her future husband's circle of friends and relatives.

Solntsoff looked on at the merry gathering of gilded youths and maidens for whose amusement the elaborate preparations were being made. He thought of his own exceeding happiness in the present Christmas, and of the happiness he might reasonably look forward to on coming returns of the holy feast. Faith, passing near with an armful of beribboned bundles, stopped and looked up at him.

"You seem very thoughtful, Lionel. Has anything saddened you?"

He drew her aside, "God has been so good to us, he is giving us such a happy festival together, Vyéra," he said. "How would it be if you and I should show our gratitude by bringing happiness to some poor children of misery? It is true that all here, both young and old, are doing for the poor in one way or another, for they have kind Russian hearts, but I mean something personal to you and me, in a very simple way, in my rooms, — something we can prepare together."

Faith responded with enthusiasm. What a beautiful remembrance to have of their first Christmas together that it had been devoted to consoling the poor and the desolate! "And you will let me take a real share in it, will you not?" she begged. "A little bit of self-denial, something that I should spend on a ball-gown that I do not need, or an extravagant present to you that you would have no use for?"

"That would be *my* self-denial!" he replied, laughingly.

It was a day of exquisite happiness that he and Faith spent together in arranging for their small waifs. There

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were seventeen little objects of charity in honor of Faith's seventeen years. They were scarcely more than babies, and several of them cripples. Solntsoff's share of the work had been to gather them together, to take them to the public baths where they were steamed and scrubbed after the sanitary Russian manner, to put them into good, warm, new clothes and shoes, to provide a wholesome supper and, for each child, a basket of groceries and tea and simple sweetmeats to take back to its squalid home. To Faith fell the more frivolous part of the work, to decorate the tree and to buy the presents, durable toys, brightly-colored pictures, ribbons for the girls, mufflers for the boys. But even in the matter of toys she felt Solntsoff's guiding hand.

"Petrúsha, the biggest boy, should have a hand-sledge, to carry the laundry baskets for his mother. Besides, he can drag his little lame sister to church on it. Ványa, the deformed lad, should have some simple tools, he is so clever with his hands and makes wonderful toys with a knife I once gave him. A box of colors for Másha. The girl is deaf and nearly dumb, but her attempts at painting are full of promise and should be encouraged. Such a wretched home! But all the children are intelligent and worthy of help, and they are so good and unselfish to one another. You would be greatly interested in them."

And again Faith was astonished by the revelation of a side of her betrothed's character which she had not suspected. He had never spoken to her of his work among the poor, just as he had never told her of his proficiency in manly sports. As it was part of the education of a gentleman to ride and shoot, to fence and swim, so he seemed to consider it belonged to the life of a Christian to devote a portion of his activities to works of charity. These were matters of course. The only things in his busy life for which he had claimed her sympathetic attention were his literary ambitions and his political principles.

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Avdótia Ilínichna,* the kindly old nurse and confidential family servant, had accompanied Faith to the shops and to Solntsoff's rooms, where his mother's governess and his present landlady, Mrs. Palmgren, presided over the little feast. Father Gavriíl, who had blessed the festival at the princely palace, came also to the modest bachelor apartment to bless the festival of the little unfortunate children of the poor. And here, too, there was laughter and happiness, all the more that it was so new and amazing to the little ones, so full of pathos for their elders.

Solntsoff's eyes were alight with subdued merriment when he had presented Mrs. Palmgren to Faith; and she at once took a great fancy to the kindly, warm-hearted governess, who had educated two generations of little Solntsoffs.

After the festival Solntsoff, Father Gavriíl and Mrs. Palmgren conducted the children with their treasures to the poor homes they were to brighten, and Faith returned with Avdótia to the palace, where, as usual, Countess Chernyatina and half a dozen relatives were dining with the old prince.

"Vyéra Kárllovna, you must absolutely skate with us at the Tavrída Garden," exclaimed young Borís Kliázemski, who was in the Corps of Pages. "The Chevaliers Gardes have flooded the grounds, and it is the most fashionable spot in Peterburg at the present moment. Every afternoon from three to five it is crowded — the officers of the swell regiments, the grand-princes, all the prettiest society girls. Oh, it is something to see! Such skating! Such costumes!"

"But I do not skate well enough, I shall disgrace myself," apologized Faith. "I never skated in my life till last winter, when I went to the Anlagen with the German schoolgirls, and we used to cling around each other's necks and scream, because the ice was so slippery! Moreover, I have no stunning costume to wear. I strongly advise you to retract

* Eudoxia, daughter of Julius.

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your invitation or I might, in an evil hour, accept it to your everlasting regret."

"I will help you out about the costume," said Natália Petrónna. "I told you not to worry about your wardrobe. You could not be expected, coming from a temperate climate, to have everything for our cold winters. We have furs in abundance to lend you."

"I have an idea," suggested Borís Boríssovich. "Let us go and practise to-morrow morning at the Islands. The ice is fine and no one ever skates there in the forenoon except a few who go for exercise and long distance skating. No one will see us, and you can hang round my neck all you please."

"What is this I hear?" asked Solntsoff, entering at that moment and helping himself to the *zakouska** at the side table. "You pages were always an insolent set!"

"Oh, nothing!" said Bórya, airily, "Vyéra Kárlovna has accepted me for her escort, — that is all. Quite an everyday affair for me to cut out a rival. Meet me at the entrance gate, Vyéra, my soul! I shall be there with my *tróika*.† Can you be up as early as ten and breakfast before eleven?"

"Early!" echoed Faith. "I cannot get used to your Russian hours. Fancy, last winter I was at school every morning at eight."

"Barbarous!" exclaimed Bórya, who would not for anything admit that the pages' hours of service were quite as barbarous. "Schoolchildren may perhaps survive it, but not civilized men and women. But now you are many degrees further north. It is dark night till nearly ten o'clock and I am not interested in sunrises. I will call for you at eleven then, with the Arabs, and drive you along the Embankment and across the Islands."

Faith thought Solntsoff looked discontented. "But I am desperately interested in sunrises," she insisted. "I

* Hors d'œuvres.

† Team of three horses harnessed abreast.

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particularly wish to see the sun coming through the winter mists from the Islands. I will skate before breakfast or not at all!"

"Very well, I am game," responded Bórya, "but don't blame me if I yawn."

It was scarce dawn when at half-past nine the next morning, after a cup of tea in her bedroom, Faith, booted and furred, ran gayly down the broad marble stairway, expecting to see the slim, dark, boyish figure of Bórya Kliázemski in his picturesque skating costume, waiting for her in the entrance hall. She saw a picturesque skating costume, indeed, but the figure it adorned was suspiciously large, stately and blond. She gave a little scream of delighted surprise, dancing round him in admiration.

"Lyóval!" she exclaimed. "You are too handsome for words!"

His blue eyes laughed with pleasure, but he smiled deprecatingly, twisting his moustache with feigned indifference. She might well admire him, for nothing could be more becoming to the big, strong, fair man than the blue, fur-trimmed, snug-fitting pelisse, belted at the waist, the full trousers thrust into high boots, the tall fur cap jauntily perched on his sunny, waving hair. She did not realize, however, that this was the first time in all their acquaintance that she had ever paid him a compliment on his personal appearance.

"He looks as pleased as Punch," she thought. "For all he is so fine a man, he is just as vain as anybody else!"

"It is lucky," she remarked, "that you did not wear this costume when I first saw you, or I should have gone down on my knees to you then and there. You were quite stunning enough, as it was, in your tweeds."

He threw his head back and laughed delightedly. Then he tucked her hand under his arm and started for the gate where the tróika was waiting.

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"But Borís Boríssovich?" she inquired. "We must wait for him."

"I bought him off," he announced, with satisfaction. "I have given him tickets for the ballet. He sends his apologies, — he couldn't help himself! If you are to hang round anybody's neck, it might as well be mine." He put her into the sleigh, wrapping the shouba* and bashlik† about her; slipped into his own furs which the groom held for him, then took the seat beside her.

"These are the famous Kliázemski Arabs," he said, as she looked enthusiastically at the three perfectly-matched black steeds, yoked abreast. "My uncle was a great lover of horses in his day, but gave over his stud to Bórya's father, Prince Borís Aleksándrovich, who has kept up the same high standard. St. Petersburg is famed for its fine horses, but I doubt if there are any finer than these for all points combined, beauty, speed, endurance, temper. The off-horse is so gentle and dainty you could bring him into the drawing-room. *Per contra*, we call him '*Ioann Grozny*,' — Ivan the Terrible. We will not try their speed now, however, for you will wish to see the sunrise effect."

They drove across the Trinity bridge at a slow trot, pausing from time to time to watch the pink-tipped clouds above the low-lying, gray mists. Under them was the frozen Nyeová, behind them the stately façades of St. Petersburg's numberless palaces on the river embankments, before them the long chain of low, rocky, well-wooded islands stretching toward the Gulf of Finland, now enshrouded in mist. Faith was so fascinated with the view that he drove her through the Islands and across the river branches of the Delta for an hour or more. Then they stepped out of the sleigh and put on their skates. Giving her a few directions, he locked his strong arm about hers in a way that seemed to

* Fur cloak.

† Embroidered cowl-shaped hood with long stole ends.

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lift her weight from her feet, and to give her a feeling of lightness and security. Losing every vestige of awkwardness or fear, she soon fell into the delightful, swinging motion, every nerve tingling with the joy of life and movement.

"I have only one fault to find," declared Solntsoff. "You are learning too quickly! When are you going to hang round my neck?"

"And you are altogether too good a teacher," she cried. "It makes me suspicious."

"Oh!" he laughed, "I have taught many a girl to skate and many a girl to dance! And some of them were very nice girls, indeed! Do not begin by being jealous of my past, Little Comrade!"

"Never fear!" she replied. "I shall not ask you any questions about it."

"Fear!" he echoed, contemptuously. "Why should I fear? But you are right, Vyéra. Never question a man! If there has been aught of sorrow or shame in his life he will tell it all, voluntarily, to the woman he loves. If he tells you nothing, it is either because his experiences have been slight and perfectly legitimate in character, or else he is of so false and insincere a nature that he would lie to you if you questioned him. You would gain nothing by questioning the latter man, you would lose much by seeming to doubt the former."

"And you are the former," she said, confidently and happily.

"Are you satisfied with your betrothed?" he asked, tenderly, glancing down sideways at her from under his long lashes.

She squeezed his arm. Really, she could not speak. This big, splendid specimen of humanity, strong morally, mentally and physically, was all her own! In a few short months he would be her husband. God had been good to her! She

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was a mere child, on the threshold of life, and her future was already so blessedly, happily settled. Satisfied?

At a little distance from them skated another picturesque figure. He was dashing but tastefully dressed in black tunic and trousers and sable furs with a touch of yellow in cap, sash and revers, most becoming to his dark, manly beauty. Catching sight of Solntsoff and his companion he looked puzzled.

The young lady with Lyéff Petróvich wore a gray and crimson skating costume with chinchilla furs, which he seemed to recognize as belonging to Countess Chernyatina. But the figure was not that of Natália Petrovna and, though Lyóva was the best of brothers, his manner toward his companion, especially at this moment, was hardly that of a brother. An amused smile lighted up the dark-fringed eyes of the observer.

"Our friend Lyóva is beginning to flirt in his old age! We must see!" He skated rapidly out, describing a long, sweeping curve which brought him within a few rods of the couple. As he swept up toward them he flashed out a keen glance, instantly withdrawn.

"My God!" he exclaimed under his breath. "It is the little Backfisch!"

Youri Andrévich's communications with his Maker were largely of an exclamatory nature. He obeyed literally the counsel of the prophet to call upon his Creator, and did so frequently, fervently, forcefully, but alas! not always in prayer.

Faith had recognized him. "It is Graf von Dovsprung," she cried.

Solntsoff slowed up and waved a greeting to Youri Andrévich, who at once whirled around and joined them, bowing low over Faith's hand and embracing Solntsoff cordially.

"So, your visit has materialized," he said. "What we saw in a vision we now see face to face. I have been absent

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from the city of Pyótr Velíky* for five months, on detail at Tiflis. I arrived last night from summer heat, and could hardly wait for morning to put on my skates, so have paid no visits, consequently have heard no gossip, and am duly surprised at your apparition. Is it in order to ask if your visit is beginning, waxing or waning?"

"I have been here ten days and have twenty more before me," replied Faith, joyously, as the three skated slowly along together, each man offering her an arm. "Please do not criticize my methods of advancing on the ice, dear Graf! I am not to the manner born, like you Russians. I am trying to acquire the skating habit but, so far, have developed only unfavorable symptoms."

"How about the dancing habit?" he asked. "That, I remember, had taken to perfection. Shall I have the pleasure of seeing you at the Galicheffs' to-night? Lyóva, don't be a miser, — spare me a mazourka!"

"Oh, but I am not going to balls," explained Faith, eagerly. "We dance a little every evening at home, when the young Kliázemskis and Shumároffs and their friends drop in, but I am just making a family visit. I am not out yet, you know. I am still only 'Backfischly,'" laughing archly up at him.

"It does not seem like seeing Peterburg, if you omit balls," said Dovsprung, with decision. He looked her over critically. "You have put your hair up, consequently your dresses, when not skating, are long. No, you are 'Backfischly' no more! Your not attending balls is an anachronism. But then, I am not so sober in my tastes as you. I am light-minded and frivolous. My ambition in life is to imitate the career of our stately Grand Marshal of the Court, Serene Highness D —, and still be leading the mazourka with the Imperial débutantes in my sixty-fourth year."

"But there is so much for me to do in your wonderful city," persisted Faith. "There is no time for social life. I am

* Peter the Great.

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busy from morning till night, and am happy every moment."

"Naturally!" he said, dryly, and glancing over at Solntsoff gave a sigh. "I shall have to become sober-minded in self-defense, for the serious, steady chaps are cutting in and taking off all the prizes. Lyóva, may I ask if I am still on Natália Petróna's good books?"

"Undoubtedly," said Solntsoff. "Drop in to tea, afternoon or evening, Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday. Other days we are apt to be at salons where you also are intimate."

"I shall hope for the pleasure." Dovsprung soon took leave of the couple, not wishing to be an unwelcome third. As he skated off he muttered to himself.

"He is holding too tight a rein! No balls, and apparently no opera or theatre, only quiet family evenings, and she — seventeen, with all the fever of dancing and music and romance in her young blood. She hasn't those big, lustrous eyes for nothing, in spite of their shining innocence. Better let her have her fling now, while she is young and unsophisticated, or she will take it after marriage. Still," he reflected, cynically, "it makes the world all the more agreeable for some of us bachelors that husbands are, occasionally, a little short-sighted."

CHAPTER XV

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"Women do not learn from word of advice or command, but only from experience. The man who shuts his eyes to this will be deceived by them. Therefore, believe me, if you wish to have control over your wife, give her full liberty, and — keep your eyes open!"

—Prince Vladimir Mestcherski.

SOLNTSOFF was very thoughtful on the homeward drive. At last he said with decision, "After all, Vyéra, you ought to have a glimpse of society life and court balls. You will assume the duties of matrimony so young, poor child, and I shall have neither the time nor the inclination to go with you into society. Make the most of your present chance. Natásha and my cousins can take you everywhere."

"My wardrobe will settle that question," said Faith, with equal decision. "Even if I cared for balls, I have, like *Miss MacFlimsey* in the American classic, nothing to wear. Besides, why should I run the risk of acquiring a taste for high life if I am to become a plebeian Mrs. Pierson, *Gaspazhá Petróva*?"

"What are you thinking of?" he exclaimed. "I am not going to drop my name and title! You will be Knegínia* Solntsova, with the same social position as any member of my family."

"Oh, I misunderstood you," said Faith, slowly; and it must be added, not regretfully.

"My words were that my title would be a drawback to me in professional life. That is true; but I shall live it down and make my fellow publicists realize that I am going

* *Knyaginia*, i. e., princess, wife of a prince. The daughter of a prince is *Knyazhná*.

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to work seriously and not as a mere dilettante. Russian princes have never been afraid of work from Pyótr Velíky, who labored as a common carpenter, to Knyáz Hilkoﬀ of to-day, who worked in a foundry and as fireman on a railroad to learn to build up Imperial industries."

"Or," added Faith, proudly, "a certain Knyáz Solntsoﬀ, who works six hours every night as a common printer in a newspaper office, to learn journalism from the foundation, and to understand the needs of those who will work under him in future."

"I am not the first Russian knyáz to go into journalism," he replied, "though not all have begun so low down on the scale."

"But you work by day as well," she complained, "and that is too much!"

"Oh, this research work that I am doing with Grand Duke Bogdán in the Imperial Archives is mere recreation. It is a temporary occupation that I have taken up at his request. It is fascinating work, and a splendid preparation for me as a study in Russian statecraft and the historic development of the Empire."

"A scholar and companion of princes by day, a job printer by night!"

"No wonder Youri Andrévich thinks me too sober for you! Come, Vyéra, let us drop serious subjects. How would you like to race?"

Faith glanced around. On the magnificent driveways along the Nyevá the golden youth of St. Petersburg were speeding their horses, usually harnessed three abreast. The splendid horses, the gay trappings, the handsome uniforms and liveries and rich furs, the crisp air tingling with snow, the short winter sunlight struggling red through a gray sky, miles of superb palaces and public buildings fronting the quays, the ice fields, stretching toward the distant haze of the Finland Gulf, dotted with skaters and sledges, all

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combined to make a rarely exhilarating scene. The three black Arabs were trembling with excitement, quivering to dash into the rapid current of the pace about them.

Faith's eyes sparkled. "I like fast trotting," she said, "but your Russian horses all look as if they were running away."

"Do not be alarmed, they are perfectly under control," laughed her lover. "Let me give you a taste of our Russian driving." He pulled up the horses and looked around for a friend to challenge.

Close behind them was a *tróika* of splendid grays, driven by a man about fifty years of age, a fine-featured, fair-bearded man. A plump, dimpled, brown-eyed girl of sixteen years sat by his side. He waved his hand to Solntsoff, who saluted both with deep respect.

"In good time, my dear Prince," said the elder man genially, in French. "We are looking for a friend to challenge. My grays are quite worthy of your Arabs, I assure you, and the road is free for a mile ahead of us. Is it as agreeable to your betrothed as to my daughter?"

"May I present Miss Brandon, Vyéra Kárllovna," said Solntsoff, adding aside to Faith, "Grand Duke* Bogdán, Grand Duchess Vyéra," while Faith bowed, wondering at the easy familiarity of the introduction.

"The young ladies are namesakes and will, I hope, become friends," said the grand duke, genially. Then in Russian, "Now, Lyéff Petróvich, do your best, little Brother! A fair field and no favors, and may heaven help the best horse!"

The two sledges were now abreast. Both men leaned forward and signaled to the impatient horses, who broke into what appeared to Faith the maddest of mad runaways. The sledges looked so low and small, the horses loomed up so large in front of them, took such wild leaps and were so untrammelled with harness that a catastrophe seemed inev-

*The Russian title is *Veliky-Knyáz*, literally Grand Prince.

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itable. But she saw her lover's laughing, confident face, his easy handling of the lines and his skilful guidance of the madcap animals, she heard the steady voices of the two men gaily chaffing each other from sledge to sledge, and soon she lost her fears and entered recklessly into the spirit of the race. For a while they were neck and neck, with the odds in favor of the grays; but as they drew to the end of the mile stretch the wonderful endurance of the Arabs began to tell. They were as fresh as when they had started and a new burst of speed brought them to the front, while the heavier grays, though they had not slackened their pace were incapable of increasing it, the Arabs winning by a generous length.

Grand Duchess Vyéra looked disappointed for a moment, but when her father congratulated Solntsoff on his victory, her face cleared, she smiled, dimpled prettily, and clapped her hands.

"How is little Uncle?"* she asked.

"He is pining for a sight of you, Vyéra Bogdánova," replied Solntsoff. "He cannot get to see your Imperial Highness, so you must have pity and come to see him."

"I will come after dinner this evening, without ceremony, if your bride will be at home," said the pleasant-faced girl.

Faith bowed shyly as Solntsoff replied that all the family would be at home to receive her.

"*'Do swidániya,'* and better luck next time!" the little grand duchess called back, as her father turned his horses away from the city and out toward the river road.

"Will she really come, and how must I receive her?" asked Faith, eagerly.

"When any members of the Imperial family call in that way, without ceremony, it is good form not to pay any special deference to their rank. They wish to be received like other callers and their wish is respected. Grand Duke

* The diminutive form is generally used in polite conversation in Russian.

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Bogdán is my chief in the Imperial Archives, and I am his attaché and master-of-the-palace. He is a very scholarly and agreeable man. His father and my uncle were intimate friends in their youth. He drops in on us half a dozen times a year and probably will again to-night."

After dinner that evening the family gathered as usual in the big drawing-room. The Alyónkins and Shumároffs were there in force, and the young Kliázemskis appeared in full dress, expecting to go later to the Galícheff ball. Faith went with the young people to a distant corner of the vast room, where they engaged in a merry round-game of cards, while the older people had clustered about the tea table, where sat the old prince, with Natália Petróvna presiding over the samovár. Suddenly the door opened. "Velíky-Knyáz Bogdán! Velíkaya-Kneshná Vyéra! Velíky-Knyáz Vsévolod! Grafínia Tyómenskaya!" announced the big footman.

Very informal indeed was the reception given the Imperial party. They were greeted, Faith noticed, exactly as other visitors who dropped in uninvited, with great cordiality but entire absence of ceremony. The two grand dukes, father and son, went up to the tea table, shook hands with the old prince, and kissed Natália Petróvna's hand. Then Grand Duke Bogdán, turning to Lyéff Petróvich, embraced him warmly, kissing him on both cheeks after the hearty Russian fashion.

"You were slow but sure, Brother!" he said, with his hands on the other's shoulders and smiling genially. "There was some talk about dying a bachelor, but you are living to get married after all. That is the best way to go about it, my friend — the right one or none, slow but sure!"

"And I am very sure," said Solntsoff, proudly and happily, holding his head very straight and high.

"Look at him, how proud he is!" laughed the grand duke.

"I am proud indeed!" said the prince, sturdily.

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Faith heard them, and it gave her a strange feeling. Lyóva proud because of her, so proud, so sure, so happy, because he had won her! And they were all good-naturedly chaffing him and wishing him every blessing and joy. How very small and unworthy it made her feel, yet it gave her added dignity and purpose. He should not be mistaken in her! He might overestimate her gifts — she could not help that, but her character was her own to make or mar, and by his standards for her she would strive to live and act.

Grand Duchess Vyéra came up to her. "Are you not going to the Galícheff ball?" she asked in English.

"No, I have not begun to go to balls yet. I am only lately in my first long dresses," laughed Faith.

"I also am not 'out' yet," said Vyéra Bogdánova, sitting down and motioning to Faith to do the same. "But you are betrothed, one is always 'out' when one is betrothed. I brought my brother to-night. He is mad about Shakespeare, and Lyéff Petróvich has told him that you read all Shakespeare's plays before you were twelve years old. He is very much afraid of you."

"He cannot be more afraid of me than I am of him," thought Faith. "What on earth does one say to grand dukes?"

The young man was tall, slender, well-featured, with large brown eyes; but Faith thought he looked pale, a little bored and rather solemn. However his manners were charming, and he relieved her of all anxiety about what to say by making the opening remark himself.

"Shall I see you this evening at the Galícheffs'," he asked, "and may I have the pleasure of the second waltz?"

"Well, well!" thought Faith, "history is certainly repeating itself. My Aunts Ludlow in their day danced with archdukes and crown princes, and now it is my turn! How I wish I were really out and could go to balls!" It was humiliating to have to refuse and explain lamely that she

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was making only a family visit, and that balls were not on her program.

"You have other things to interest you," began the young man, politely.

"She isn't 'out' yet. This is her first long gown," interrupted Vyéra Bogdánova, mischievously.

"That is a profoundly interesting thing," observed her brother, and a slight smile relieved the solemnity of his aspect, "if, indeed, it can be as momentous an occasion to a girl to have her garments lengthened as to a boy. No personage on earth could really be as important as I felt in my first long trousers."

"Besides that, she is betrothed, which is truly important," said his sister, flippantly.

"Ah! There the possibility of any similarity ceases, for when a man becomes betrothed no one on earth is ever quite so unimportant as he is made to feel himself."

"But Lyéff Petróvich just said that he was proud," retorted the sister.

"He was bluffing," said Vsévolod Bogdánovich, coolly. "He may be proud of his betrothed, but he knows very well that she is the whole thing and he is not in it."

Faith was amused to hear so much of the then current American slang from the grave-faced young man who, for the rest, spoke English with hardly a trace of foreign accent.

"It sounds strange to hear Americanisms in St. Petersburg," she observed.

"I learned them in Paris," he replied, with a very agreeable smile which lent his countenance much charm. "There they are the rage. We all *bluff*, we all *flirt*, we all *boston*."

"Boston?" she asked, puzzled. "I do not know what that is. I hope it is nothing very bad, for Boston is my native city."

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At this moment the drawing-room door again opened and the big footman announced, "Polkovnik* Graf von Dovsprung-Zaozérski!" †

Faith looked up eagerly. Youri Andrévich was a truly splendid apparition in white and scarlet uniform, sable furs, and glittering orders. She had thought him handsome in civilian dress, but now he seemed like some resplendent figure from realms of chivalry. No wonder he was called St. George, the divine warrior, the Irresistible, the Victorious!

The little grand duchess also glanced up. A dreamy look came into her brown eyes. Her dimpled face grew pensive. He was farther away from her than was King Cophetua from the beggar maid, for the King could make the peasant girl his queen; but a grand duchess may not marry a colonel of her cousin's staff!

After he had greeted his host and hostess and their circle, and remained a few moments in conversation with them, Dovsprung started toward the group of young people.

"Youri Andrévich, for pity's sake!" called Grand Duke Vsévolod to him, in Russian. "Have I made a blunder? Miss Brandon does not understand 'boston'!"

"How is that? You do not boston?" asked Dovsprung, gayly, in French.

Faith looked blank and bewildered.

"It is not beyond remedy. Let us teach her!" he suggested to the young man. Vsévolod Bogdánovich responded eagerly.

"Yes, indeed! It will not be carrying coals to Newcastle to teach a Boston lady to boston. Let us adjourn to the ballroom."

"Then it isn't a game of cards?" said Faith, as they passed through a suite of reception-rooms into the ballroom where

*Colonel.

† Pronounced Zah-ahz-yóŕ-skee.

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Bórya Kliázemski, who had followed with Grand Duchess Vyéra, turned on the electric lights and threw open the piano.

Grand Duke Vsévolod sat down at the piano and began to play a waltz with considerable grace and spirit. "We will take turns," he nodded to Dovsprung. "You first, my Colonel! It was your suggestion."

And once more Faith found herself floating off into a dance on the arm of Youri Andrévich, a quicker, livelier step than the former graceful glide she remembered so well, but she soon caught the motion. Bórya danced with the little grand duchess for a while, then he went to the piano and they changed partners, Grand Duke Vsévolod dancing with Faith, and Dovsprung with the pensive, blushing Grand Duchess Vyéra.

Attracted by the sound of the music the other guests, with their hosts, flocked to the ballroom, some to join in the dancing, some to look on at the pretty scene. Faith danced with Borís Boríssovich, then with Volódia* Shumároff, then again with the grand duke. This time the latter discovered that she did not know the mazurka or understand the figures of the française.

"We must have other instructive evenings," he said. "But I cannot come here again for some time. It is a stupid thing, but people would see something political in it." They sat down for a while to rest.

"Would you not find it a bore," he asked, "never to be able to do what you like without creating a commotion? There are two things in life which I especially enjoy. One is a pleasant, informal evening among friends, the other is—the theatre. But if I visit my friends or have them visit me more than twice a season, immediately the whisper goes round that some political intrigue is on foot. If I enjoy a fine play and go to see it a second time, immediately the

*Diminutive of Vladímir.

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world will have it that I am in love with the leading lady. If I should dare witness the play a third time, though I never stirred from the box, the foreign press would be ringing with 'the latest scandal among the grand dukes'! What should one do? Be conscientious and live a life of boredom, or, like my cousin Fédia,* kick over the traces, saying that one may as well have the game as the name? That is the question!"

Faith looked at the pale, handsome face in some wonderment. She did not reply at once. She was unused to the confidences of nineteen-year-old lads, except the cousinly complaints of Brandy Ludlow. After a moment he glanced at her with one of his rare, illuminating smiles.

"You are surprised that I speak so much about myself to a new acquaintance and a foreigner," he said, "but I know you are sincere and true or you would not be the chosen of Lyéff Petróvich. Permit me to tell you how much I admire him. He is not only a brilliant man but a very sincere and disinterested one. To my sorrow I know that those things do not always go together. Our family has no truer friends than our two hosts. I would rather have a scolding from Lyéff Petróvich than praise from all the rest of the court. I should be sure I merited the scolding, but far from sure that I had earned the praise."

"Does he scold?" asked Faith. "You frighten me."

Vsévolod Bogdánovich looked earnestly at her. "Do you not like to be scolded? Is it not a refreshing tonic?" he inquired. "Yes, if you deserve it, he will scold you also, and you will be glad that you have such a friend. Perhaps I should not suggest that you could ever deserve it?"

"Why should you not suggest it?" asked Faith. "You have hinted that you do not like flattery. Would you, then, be like the rest of the world and say nothing to us young girls but what is flattering?"

*Diminutive of Fyódor (Theodore).

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"I suppose so," he replied. "I should wish to please you and have you like me and would say only pleasant things to you. If I were a courtier I should be like the majority of courtiers, I should wish to please the Imperial family and to have them like me and bestow favors on me, so I would take good care to say only agreeable things to them. It is small wonder that we never hear the truth, except from that rare animal, a disinterested courtier like Lyéff Petróvich."

"Not even from your enemies?" suggested Faith, smilingly.

"From them least of all! Ninety-nine times out of a hundred they know absolutely nothing about us. They have never held our hands or looked into our eyes, they do not remotely guess the workings of our minds or our hearts. What they have to say about us is usually so far from the truth that we can learn little or nothing from it. If they could come into closer touch with us they would be our friends, not our enemies. But I have trespassed on your kindness long enough. I thank you, Miss Brandon, for your patience and sympathy, and I will take your counsel to heart."

Faith was scarlet. "I am afraid you are satirical," she said. "I could not presume to counsel. I have said nothing, for I have no right to speak. I am as ignorant of the situation as the worst of your enemies."

"You have spoken," he said, pleasantly, "as plainly as if you had said it in words. You were thinking — 'Things are not so bad but that they might be worse. That young man should pull himself together and see if he cannot turn a circumscribed position into a large opportunity. If he will ponder less on what he cannot do and more on what he can do, it will be better for him and for Russia.'"

"How — how did you know?" stammered Faith.

"It must be my guilty conscience that spoke through you," he laughed. "You think I have not much to complain of, and you are probably right."

"Nobody could sympathize with you better than a girl,"

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observed Faith. "What position could be more circumscribed than ours? We are hemmed around with conventionalities, not permitted to follow any of our natural tastes and impulses, and always fearful of the breath of scandal. We have to sit still and let all sorts of possibilities pass by us, and cannot hold out a hand to one. But all things are relative. Even in democratic America one can be limited by one's family position. I have a cousin who is the son of a bishop, and he cannot dance, or play cards, or go to the theatre for fear of scandalizing his father's flock! I have another cousin whose grandfather was a distinguished general in our Civil War, and, when he went to the military academy, he was hazed almost to death for fear he might presume on his inherited distinction."

"I think," said the grand duke, slowly, "that I would rather be hazed to death than be bored to death."

"Nonsense!" cried Faith, sharply. "You are not bored. You are only lazy."

Then she was frightened. It certainly did not sound like the correct thing to say, "Nonsense!" to an Imperial Highness; and how had she dared call him lazy when, for all she knew, he might be the most hard-working young man in Christendom?

He assuredly looked startled for an instant. Then his large brown eyes lighted up quite merrily and he laughed most good-naturedly.

"I was not mistaken in giving you credit for sincerity," he said, "if severity be sincerity."

"I beg your pardon!" said Faith, humbly. "I spoke hastily, without any knowledge of your character or habits. I may be quite wrong. I certainly was inexcusably rude."

"At least," remarked the grand duke, "I have not been bored."

"Come, Vola! Come Vyérochka!" called Grand Duke Bogdán to his children, who excused themselves to their

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partners, and bid a formal, courteous good night to the family of their host.

A group about the piano now begged for a song. Dovsprung rose and looking through some piles of music laid two or three selections on the rack, while Natália Petróna, an accomplished musician, took her seat at the instrument and began the accompaniment. The pieces he had chosen were romances by that master of emotional song, Tsesar Kyúi to words by Púshkin. There was a hush. The young people seated themselves quietly, almost reverently to listen. And the songs were all that Faith had hoped and expected from the genius of poet and composer, and from the rich, vibrant voice, the impassioned temperament and exquisite artistry of the manly singer.

Such singing moved Faith deeply, giving her a joy, a satisfaction so perfect that it was almost pain. Yet, underneath, she was conscious of a certain jealous loyalty, angered that so great a gift belonged to this man, and not to that other man to whom her heart's love was consecrated. "If only Lyóva could sing!" she sighed.

Now a livelier strain arose, Romberg's spirited love-song, "*Dáite Krylia mne perelyótnia*,"* the swinging rhythms of the violin obbligato played with much dash by Yeléna Shumárova. Faith was fascinated.

The music ceased. Dovsprung left the piano and slipped into the vacant chair by Faith's side.

"You are musical," he said. "I could see that by the points you most appreciated in the songs."

"I am musical only as a listener," said Faith. "I have no talent as a performer, or at least, only a very old-fashioned one. My aunts taught me to play the harp, but I have had no instrument for two years."

"The harp!" echoed Dovsprung, softly and reminiscently. "I can just recall my mother playing the harp, and my

* "Give wings to me far-flying."

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standing by her side, a ten-year old lad in our castle in the Oukráine, I singing to her accompaniments the old war songs of Little Russia, and my father, with my little sister upon his knee, and old Stepán, his steward and secretary, joining in the choruses. Will you not resurrect your talent and play for me? It would revive such sacred memories."

"I will try!" promised Faith, touched by his sentiment. "There is a beautiful harp here. I have been attempting to get my fingers into shape the last few days. I shall love to hear the old folk-songs."

"And you will, I hope, also like to hear opera. I have Knyáz Ratmiroff's loge for Thursday and have asked Natália Petróna to bring you. I am sorry there is no Russian piece on, but the most charming tenor of the day, Anselmi, is to sing 'Faust'."

"Oh, I am so glad! If you will believe it, I have never seen that opera."

"Is it possible? I thought 'Faust' was inevitable!"

"It must seem strange," explained Faith. "I used to go to the opera regularly every fortnight in Germany, but, you see, I was only a 'Backfisch' and the Germans are very particular what young girls see and read. 'Faust' is on our Index, both the opera and Goethe's play. We read almost everything else of Goethe's, but not 'Faust' or 'Werther'."

"May I ask," inquired Dovsprung, with amused curiosity, "what operas your German censors allowed you to attend?"

"We saw 'Lohengrin,' the 'Flying Dutchman,' and the 'Meistersinger' of Wagner's. Besides these we saw 'William Tell,' 'Der Freischütz,' 'The White Lady,' 'Trompeter von Seckingen,' 'Star of the North,' 'Tsar and Carpenter,' 'Orpheus and Eurydice,' 'Fidelio,' 'Hänsel and Gretel,' and — let me think — oh, yes — 'Don Giovanni'."

At the mention of the last opera Dovsprung, who had been

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listening with becoming gravity, felt his lips twitch. What a comical anticlimax, the discreet procession topped off with this indiscretion, the gay adventures of a libertine!

"Which were your favorites?" he asked, looking preternaturally solemn to conceal a wild desire to laugh.

"Oh, 'Lohengrin' and 'Don Giovanni'! 'Lohengrin' is such a beautiful, appealing ideal. It is grander, more uplifting, but 'Don Giovanni' is very fascinating."

"The ladies usually find him so," he commented. "They think him distressingly wicked and would be glad, like *Elvira*, to have an opportunity to try and save his soul!"

"I couldn't make out the story," said Faith. "It was very confused, and they did not permit us to have the libretto, but the music was lovely."

"The libretto is said to be wretchedly poor stuff, quite unworthy of Mozart's exquisite music," said Dovesprung aloud, muttering under his breath, "Thank heaven for all that you did not know!"

But, as he wrapped himself warmly in his furs and drove from the palace to the Galicheck ball, "Faust" lay heavy on his mind. How would it strike a modest, innocent young girl to witness that scene of seduction for the first time? He could recall through the mists of years how, as a stripling of twenty, it had saddened him and made him uncomfortable to see the net spreading round the sweet, thoughtless, enamored young Gretchen of the opera. He had been uncommonly modest and "green" himself, in those far-off days. He had long since become hardened and indifferent to the story, and for many years had thought only of the vocal art of the singers in witnessing the opera. But would "Backfishly" be sad and uncomfortable, even as he had first been? Must her eyes be opened to the shame and anguish of the story in his presence, and that of a stranger, like Ratmiroff? No! only a father, only a husband, only the tenderest of elder brothers should see the veil of igno-

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rance lifted from the mind of innocence. It was unfitting, it was intolerable that the revelation should come to her in the presence of men of the world like Ratmiroff and himself.

Like himself! He started slightly and grew thoughtful.

There was but one thing to do,— go to Solntsoff and leave the question to him. In the absence of father or brother who should be her guardian, her protector, her guide,— who but her future husband?

CHAPTER XVI

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“‘The world calls you a wicked man!’”

“‘What world? It must be the next world, for this world and I are on excellent terms!’”

— *Wilde.*

FROM this evening a wider social circle was opened to Faith. There were no balls or court functions on her list, for where-withal should she provide herself the necessary toilettes? But there were plenty of informal dances, theatre parties, private theatricals, concerts and suppers during the evenings, where her dainty girlish wardrobe would pass muster, while the day was made merry for her with sledging parties, skating, riding, ice-hill sledding, luncheons, musicals and other festivities. Besides these, much time was devoted to sight seeing, visiting the marvelous picture galleries, the superb palaces, churches and museums.

And everywhere was the atmosphere of joyous, genial, sympathetic life. Society, especially in the conservative circles to which her hosts belonged, was informal, hospitable, abounding in gayety and good cheer, the expression of a democratic, warm-hearted, intelligent and highly accomplished aristocracy, of charming manners and genial dispositions. This society was very kind to Faith, presented to it as she was through unexceptionable channels, and it may be said that though she did not set the social world on fire, yet she had, in a quiet way, a success that was all her own. The older people were attracted by her sweet, modest, but responsive and sympathetic manner, and found her intelli-

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gent and interesting to talk with. The young people liked her frank, pleasant, companionable ways. Some of the men, neither old nor very young, felt in her upright, girlish presence and in the clear innocence of her lovely, starlike eyes, a strange inclination to recall memories of vanished dreams and early ideals, of a mother's prayers, of a confessor's counsels, of boyhood visions of chivalry and faith and love. Strange memories to steal over them in the midst of a dance, or the whirl of ice-hill sledding, or between the courses of a merry supper party! They could not account for it. Few tried to account for it. At best, it was an ephemeral mood. She was the betrothed of one of their set, for his sake they paid her many attentions, and for her own sake enjoyed doing so; but she was not for them, and so their interest acquired no deep or tender significance, for in their Russian eyes, betrothal was almost as sacred as marriage.

There was one of their number, however, whose attitude toward Faith's betrothed was one less of loyalty than of criticism and dissatisfaction.

Youri Andrévich was very well pleased with himself. He felt that he had certainly shown an ideal delicacy of feeling with regard to the little "Backfisch," far more than Lyéff Petróvich, who, prig and moralist though he was, had seemed unable to rise to the same heights as himself.

"He has no knowledge of women," grumbled Dovsprung. "He is a scribbler and a dreamer. He spends the greater part of his nights in a newspaper office, sleeps half the day, and spends the other half in dry research or wild schemes of philanthropy and reform. He would not even give up his absurd printing to take her to 'Faust' the other night, merely thanked me in a perfunctory way, and suggested my offering the loge to that most domestic couple, Alyónkin and his wife!"

This heinous conduct on the part of Lyéff Petróvich irritated him greatly. "Will he neglect her like this after mar-

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riage? Ah, Brother! You deserve to lose her, if you cannot sacrifice for her one of your smug, respectable ambitions and occupations. No woman of spirit will stand it. Good heavens! He must be a vainer man than I, if he thinks he can retain a woman's love without some effort on his part. If I had a wife like that sweet girl, I would lock her up like a Turk; or, if I let her go into the world, I should never stir from her side, except, of course, just enough to keep her on tenterhooks for fear of losing me! Matrimony," he continued, thoughtfully, "might be made almost as absorbingly interesting a game as love, if cleverly played. But," he added, cautiously, twirling his moustache and squaring his shoulders, "I am not ready yet to put on the matrimonial yoke. Time enough at forty, or even fifty. That leaves me a good many years more to lead the mazourka with the Imperial debutantes." A career, truly!

As he changed from his skating costume to his uniform he laughed somewhat sheepishly. "I feel like a sixteen-year-old schoolboy," he ejaculated. "All Peterburg must be smiling to see the sophisticated 'Geórgiy Pobyedonósets' skating half the afternoon with a flock of nurslings, and staying away from the most spicy farce of the season to take a Backfischly down an ice-hill by moonlight. Let them laugh! If I enjoy it, whose affair is it? If I choose to amuse myself innocently it is only one of my vagaries, a temporary aberration! Who knows but, if I go on at this rate, I shall turn monk some day? I suppose they will see something laughable even in that!"

It was the first time in his social career that he had ever devoted himself to a young girl, and he knew that it had caused remark, but he could tell himself on his honor that there had been no sentiment in it, that he had made no attempt to win her affection away from her betrothed. He was merely the oldest of a dozen friends and relatives of Solntsoff's who were doing their best to make Miss Brandon's

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visit an enjoyable one. Why should people notice it in him more than in Volódia Shumároff, who was himself betrothed, or in Grand Duke Vsévolod, or Bórya Kliázemski, or in Nikíta Ryápoloff and Seriózha Milítsyn? Was he less honorable than these, or did they fail to see that the child had eyes for none but Solntsoff himself? It was a blind, spiteful, stupid world!

Dovsprung was conscious of an odd change in his tastes. The ballet and theatrical spheres frankly bored him of late, the gossip of clubs, cafés and foyers seemed inexpressibly stale, wearisome, even repulsive. He knew St. Petersburg society so well that the thought of a new flirtation had no piquancy for him. Would it be different if he were once more installed in a diplomatic post in some other gay capital? Or was he growing old at thirty-four? To be sure, he had lately returned from several months of exacting work in a warm, debilitating climate, where he had had to lead the life of an ascetic, and perhaps he was temporarily a little under the weather. He felt well, he slept well, his appetite was up to the mark, what but overwork and climate could account for this strange indifference to his former gay pursuits?

Day after day his steps turned sooner or later toward the Kliázemski palace, and he often met the little Fidès at other houses, but his bearing was irreproachable. He never sought to be alone with her. She was learning to accompany him on the harp as he sang to her the ballads and folk-songs of Little Russia; but they were always surrounded by a congenial group, for the other young men and women of their circle were also teaching Faith, instructing her to play Russian airs on the balaláika and to dance the court dances.

"Are you yourself from Little Russia?" asked Faith, as he finished one of the exquisite songs of that country.

"We have lived in Little Russia for six centuries, though the first of our line was old Dovsprung, the pagan Grand

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Prince of Lithuania in the tenth century. I suppose he had parents, perhaps even grandparents, but a line of ascent must begin somewhere! His descendants fought in alliance with the Lithuanian princes who drove the Tatars out of Little Russia in 1302. The main branch of the family remained subjects of Poland, where they are called 'Dovmont,' and retain the title of prince; but my branch acquired estates just over the Polish border and beyond the lakes, whence the addition *Za-ozzer-ski*.^{*} The counts Dovsprung-Zaozerski, therefore, have lived in Little Russia nearly six hundred years, and are thoroughly Russian in everything, save religion."

"Religion?" echoed Faith, adding laughingly, "I trust you are not still pagans, like your princely forbears."

"I am afraid there is a good deal of paganism yet in my unregenerate nature," he sighed, "though I am by birth and education a Christian and an Uniát."

"An Uniát?" inquired Faith. "That sounds like a Unitarian."

"God forbid! We would lay down our lives for the Holy Trinity. It is the Church's unity that we stand for. The Slavic race was christianized by the Greek Church which, at that period, was in union with Rome. The Uniáts are so still. The Apostles to the Slavs, Cyril and Methodius, are saints of both the Roman and the Russian calendars."

"You mean that you are Roman Catholics?" asked Faith.

"We are, in the sense that we have never ceased to be in union with the See of Peter. But we are not of the Latin rite. We are of the Greek rite, and have the Old-Slavonic liturgy, exactly like the Orthodox Russians. But I am no theologian. Let us rather talk music."

"Oh, no! Tell me more about the Uniát position. I am intensely interested in these questions."

^{*}*Za*, beyond, *ózero*, a lake.

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"You place me in a trying predicament, Fidès," said Dovesprung, irresolutely. "I am no monk, I am not a fitting person to discuss religion, but neither am I an infidel. Even the devils, you know, believe! If I am questioned, I must declare my belief. I am an Uniát both by tradition and by conviction. I am a soldier, I come of a warrior race and have the soldier instinct that the Church Militant should have a divinely-appointed commander-in-chief, supreme in the field, though representing a yet Higher Power. Such, both faith and history tell me, is the Vicar of Christ on earth, the Roman Pontiff. But how can I in honor say more on this point, when it is the one thing, were you to accept it, which would place an insurmountable barrier between you and your betrothed?"

Faith turned a little pale and looked startled. "I see," she said after a while, "that I must not ask you any more questions; and yet, I should not hesitate to examine this important point merely because it might lead me away from Lyéff Petróvich."

It was Dovesprung's turn to grow pale and look startled. What did the girl mean? Was she of such heroic mold that Truth was more to her than Love? Or was she of earthly mold, like too many he had known, ready to sunder a bond to which she had perhaps grown indifferent? Did she mean that she would break her earthly faith for the sake of a higher Faith, or was she giving him to understand that she held her promise lightly, ready to transfer it to another who might seek to win it? Was she merely, like many other women he had known, making of religion a pretext for a certain sentimental intimacy?

It seemed to him that a breath of doubt dimmed the clear brightness of the shield of innocence and loyalty in which he had hitherto seen reflected the face of Fidès!

Later that evening, at the ballet, he visited between the acts the loge of Baroness Avellan, the German wife of a Swe-

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dish attaché, and she was soon whispering confidentially to him behind her fan.

"Aha! dear Graf! All Peterburg is talking of how a certain prince and chamberlain is jealous of a certain aide-de-camp and attaché, and would not allow him to attend his betrothed at the opera the other evening. We are all wondering how the affair was arranged without a duel, considering the young colonel's well-known high spirit."

Dovsprung smiled contemptuously. "Dear Baroness," he remarked, pleasantly, "if it was as easily arranged as a little affair of mine last Thursday, then the city may sleep tranquilly."

"And how was that, if it is not indiscreet to ask?"

"Not at all! The simplest thing in the world! Ratmiroff and I had invited Grafínia Chernyatina and her young American guest to his loge for 'Faust.' I found at the last moment that the charming little schoolgirl had never seen the opera, and was profoundly ignorant of its story. It is hard to put one's self in the place of such ingenuousness, but" —he hesitated, twirled his moustache in dreamy fashion, and the somewhat bold brilliancy of his eyes softened to a tender, far-away look. "Perhaps I am a foolish idealist, Baroness, but — it is our Russian nature — I cannot help it! I have the memory of a little sister, and of a loved little kinswoman, taken from us in the bloom of their girlish innocence. I would not have wished them to learn such a story for the first time in the presence of — well — of men who were not their fathers or their brothers. Call me a scrupulous fool, if you will; but at the last moment I went to Solntsoff, told him that Ratmiroff and I were unexpectedly detailed on duty, and arranged to have that respectable father of a numerous flock, Alyónkin, with his wife, escort the ladies in our place. We joined them later at supper, and passed a friendly, delightful evening together. That is the whole matter, Baroness. A very simple, amicable affair!"

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She stared at him, then turned her head aside and laughed dryly. "I believe you, my dear Graf, though others may not, for I know well your profoundly sentimental nature. All very idealistic and pretty, but sadly misplaced on this special occasion."

He colored angrily. "Why misplaced, charming Baroness?"

"Because you do not comprehend American girlhood. You have few examples in St. Petersburg, but I have met many of them in other capitals. My dear Graf, these girls are brought up to understand everything — simply *everything*. It is astonishing, it is nothing short of incomprehensible, that she can preserve those starlike eyes and that distracting air of innocence — at twenty-two years of age, for I happen to know she is not the schoolgirl she appears! Her sisters, out of jealousy, kept her in short frocks long after she was full-grown. I was at Montreux last autumn and learned much about this 'child,' who, you fear, might be contaminated by seeing 'Faust' in your presence. All the world there knew that Solntsoff was forced into the engagement by her family, because she had run away from them and taken refuge in his rooms. You can see that his heart is not in the match, he goes nowhere with her. At Yalta, also, there was trouble. They had to send her off hurriedly to boarding school to keep her from being compromised, a married man, too, an Austrian baron. So your chivalrous delicacy need not be alarmed lest sophisticated Young America will be made to blush by anything so conventional and old-fashioned as 'Faust.' Ha, ha! Really, dear Graf!"

Dovsprung was irritated. He had been a fool, with his sentimental idealism, and tenfold a fool to have confided in the talkative Baroness Avellan. He would be jeered at by half Peterburg before the night was over! It irritated him, too, that this woman should so coolly brush the bloom off the freshness of the little Fidès. He recalled now, that

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she had indeed been sent hastily away from Yalta the day after his arrival. He had supposed it to be from her sister's jealousy of Solntsoff's attentions, but now it appeared that it was Stourdza, her hostess's husband! He knew Stourdza, knew that though not faultless he was yet a gentleman, punctilious about points of honor and etiquette, who would not compromise a young girl, or his wife's guest. If there had been talk, the girl's own imprudence must have caused it.

Dovsprung grew hot with mortification. It was really absurd how he had let himself get interested in that child, how he had idealized her and behaved in such an idiotically scrupulous way about her. With all his experience he had been deceived by her air of aristocratic breeding, combined with the simplicity and pretty timidity of a German Backfisch. She had captured Solntsoff by these same wiles, and now Lyóva, poor fellow, would gladly be out of it. His open neglect and indifference were plainly accounted for. He was just the fellow to be so taken in. But Dovsprung felt that there was no excuse for the credulity of so experienced a man of the world as himself. He had been so absurdly chivalrous toward her, had surrounded her with every restraint and protection as if she had been the most exquisite type of convent-bred ingenuousness, and all the time she had been fooling him to the top of her bent. The baroness might well jeer at him. Lyéff Petróvich had probably also been highly amused by his ridiculous scruples. Oh, it was very funny, very laughable indeed! But "he laughs best who laughs last!" He would turn the tables on them!

At this juncture he looked up and caught the sly, curious eyes of Baroness Avellan searching his face.

"The little, unsophisticated innocent may not have seen 'Faust' before," she said, slowly and meaningly, "but she has seen — not once, but three times — seen, read, and

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understood, 'Tristan and Isolde,' that *Isolde* who wedded the king for his title, but won the knight as her lover."

Dovsprung felt nothing but supreme contempt for the woman beside him who was so insinuatingly bringing to his mind this tale of treachery and lawless love. He did not ask himself what ideas had been formulating in his own mind before she spoke; he condemned her as a jealous, intriguing woman, playing a base part toward one of her own sex. Nevertheless, he spent the remainder of the *divertissement* in her loge, though without giving her the satisfaction of finding out the effect of her words. His expression was impenetrable; and with apparent indifference he turned the conversation to other subjects of social interest.

But something rankled deeply in his soul. Fidès, the little Fidès, had lied to him! He had asked her what operas she had been allowed to see, and she had designedly omitted one that she had seen three times. If she could so deliberately deceive him, then was all true that Madame Avellan had told him. There was no Fidès! no Backfischly! nothing but a lost illusion!

Leaving the ballet he retraced his steps to the Kliázemski palace, for there was still an hour before he was due at the club, where a farewell supper was to be given at midnight to a retiring Italian diplomat. A dozen young people, rosy and jolly, were just returning from ice-hill sledding by electric light in the palace garden, where Faith had been thrilled by the daring of the young officers, standing on each other's shoulders as they went down the hills at terrific speed, and performing a number of other hair-raising feats.

They lingered in the great hall, laughing and shaking the frozen snow from their furs. They gathered about the big, open fires and sang as they warmed themselves. Dovsprung found a seat next to Faith and under cover of the songs and laughter began to talk to her in melancholy mood.

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"The time seems so short before you will be gone, — for how long, Fidès?"

"For eight months," she replied, and it suddenly seemed to her, also, that it would be long. She, too, sighed a little and looked sad.

He marked the change of expression. "For you, it is nothing," he said gloomily. "You have happiness to look forward to; for me, there is nothing but loneliness and saddest retrospect." His voice grew low and tense. "Fidès, there is a tale from the heroic ages, of the knight *Tristan* and the damsel *Isolde*, the betrothed of his king. He loved her, but was in honor bound to his lord and friend. It is an unhappy tale, but alas! not confined to the days of old. Do you know their story?"

"Oh, yes," said Faith, readily. "At least, I know the story of the Wagner opera. I have seen it three times."

"Indeed," he said, looking directly and searchingly into her face. "You neglected to include that opera in the very discreet list you recently gave me of operas you had seen."

Faith colored hotly. There was something so unpleasant, almost insolent in his tone and manner that her pride was up in arms in an instant. Did he mean to accuse her of lying? She would answer no such ungentlemanlike accusation. She was proudly silent for a while, but her sensitive spirit was deeply wounded that one who had always treated her with such exquisite courtesy and reverent chivalry should so suddenly alter his bearing. The tears came to her eyes and her lips trembled. To the man who watched her she looked the picture of confusion and detected guilt.

After a moment she gathered herself together. The explanation was so simple, why should she refuse it? She tried to speak quietly and naturally, but to her mortification she stumbled over her words and felt her cheeks grew hotter and hotter.

"I understood you to ask what operas my German censors

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had permitted me to see," she explained, "and I answered you with that idea. But last summer, my brother took me to Munich, where I saw 'Tristan and Isolde' three times as well as 'Tannhauser' and the 'Nibelungen Trilogy', for Rupert is Wagner mad. Here, thanks to your kind invitation, I have seen 'Faust,' and since then 'Zhizn za Tsária,'"* 'Yevgéni Onyégin' and the ballet 'Snyegúrochka.'† That is all that I can remember of ever having seen.'

"Make an act of contrition for all the sins of your past life," he said, with sarcastic solemnity. "I do not presume to be your father-confessor, but you say off your little list exactly as if you were making a general confession."

Faith looked up, demurely. "I am glad you know the formula so well," she remarked. "Somehow, I fancied you would not be familiar with it."

"I hope," he replied, "that you mean I can have nothing to confess?" He looked a little red and displeased. "Whether I practise my religion or not, I am at least well-instructed in it. I am no scoffer. I reverence the sacraments. You do not know our Russian nature, if you think otherwise."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," exclaimed Faith, greatly distressed. "I should not have tried to chaff you on such a subject. I was inexcusably thoughtless. I do indeed give you credit for conviction and reverence. I know that the Russian nature is deeply religious."

"I cannot explain it," he said, thoughtfully. "An Anglo-Saxon can be outwardly reverent, and remain inwardly wholly indifferent, even skeptical. A Latin is so logical that the moment his life ceases to conform to his religion he becomes a scoffer, antagonistic to all faith. But a Russian, be he devil or saint, or plain, everyday sinner, can neither cease to believe nor learn to be indifferent. We must believe

* "Life for the Tsar."

† "Sleeping Beauty."

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and believe fanatically. We may be illogical, but we are never indifferent. In the rare instances where a Russian ceases to believe in God, then he believes with equal fanaticism and fatalism in some other deity — Anarchy, Revolution, Dynamite, Universal Brotherhood, — the absurd Brotherhood of Socialism, without a Father God, or a Mother Church, or an Elder Brother Christ, or a Holy Spirit of Love!”

He saw the unmitigated surprise in Faith’s wide eyes. He laughed sardonically. “It is incongruous, is it not? The cynical Dovsprung talking religion! But, there! I am a Russian. Let it pass!”

Dovsprung left the circle when supper was announced, and stepping into his sledge, drawn by a high-bred trotter, was driven to the club, reflecting as he went upon the idea that he must now meet the little Fidès upon new ground. He did not find it easy to adapt himself to the changed situation.

“She extricated herself plausibly enough,” he thought. “I must give her credit for cleverness. I wonder what else she has lied to me about? They are all alike. One cannot even divide them into the good and the bad, only into the clever and the stupid.” He yawned. Then he flushed a little. Certainly she had fooled him cleverly enough with that what the Avellan had so aptly named her “distracting air of innocence,” so fascinatingly combined with intelligence, sympathy and good companionship. Alas, his illusion was over now! She was no longer the ingenuous “Backfischly,” no longer the loyal “Fidès,” but a wide-awake, sophisticated, deceitful little flirt, who was probably laughing in her sleeve at his absurd Quixotism, or perhaps was piqued that she had not succeeded in bringing him to her feet. Well, he would let her know that he was not so easily caught. He would flirt with her to a certain point, but not seriously, — a purely Platonic affair. He had lost interest in her now. Besides, thank God, he was a man

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of honor. She was Lyóva's betrothed. He had never yet played a trick on a friend.

After all, he could not help sighing for his lost illusion, foolish as it had been. It had taken him back to the days, fourteen years ago, when he was a stripling of twenty, full of romantic dreams, and as unstained himself as any Backfischly. He and Lyéff Petróvich had been great friends in those days. Lyóva was the same to-day as then, while he, Youri Andrévich, was—er—well—changed. But then, he had ambition and social gifts and had good red blood in his veins, and many brilliant women had loved him madly; while Lyóva was a phlegmatic student, a matter-of-fact publicist, a goody-goody philanthropist, whose few women friends were all patterns of dull virtue. There could be no comparison between them. It seemed to him now, that if Fidès were only what he had dreamed her, he would throw honor and friendship to the winds, he would snatch his bride from the laggard Lyóva at the very altar, he would surrender his offices and career to fly with her to his estates in the Ukráine far from gossiping tongues; and there she should learn to love him as never man was so sweetly loved before, and be his idolized wife, the chatelaine of his castle, the ——

He broke off here, and his short upper lip curled disdainfully.

"Am I turning into a daisy of the field — I, 'George the Victorious?'" he sneered. "How long should I be satisfied away from the honors and interests that are the very breath of my nostrils? No, it is better as it is! Another illusion gone, that is all! I thought I saw a loyal Griselidis, an angelic Elizabeth; and lo! it is only Isolde, looking about for a Tristan! Ah well then, good-bye, sweet Backfischly! My clever Isolde, I salute you!"

CHAPTER XVII

TRISTAN

"To seek to know the world is self-deception and a vain endeavor of the heart. It is a hundredfold more pleasant to stay at home, shielded from the temptations of the world, to live simply with your family, to pass your time modestly, to commune vigorously with reason and — to poke the logs in the fireplace!"

— *Prince Iván Dolgorúki.*

DOVSPRUNG'S talk with Faith left her in a state of astonishment. Hitherto he had seemed to her a showy, drawing-room hero, gallant, superficial, self-satisfied. That there were depths to his nature she had not at first suspected was evident from the seriousness with which he had cultivated his musical gifts, and the tender feeling for his mother and his early home which her harp-playing had awakened. But in matters of religion she should have expected him to be a skeptic, if not a scoffer. She was not prepared to find him a man of conviction, of thought, and of loyal, though, alas! not practical faith.

A sudden bustle and joyous outcry at the entrance to the hall interrupted her musings. A party of some thirty masqueraders came trooping in, men and women, dressed in old historic costumes of ancient Russia, the Russia of *Boyárs* and *Bogatyr*s and *Variags*.^{*} They were of the young married set, celebrating the close of the holidays by going from house to house to serenade their acquaintance. Saluting their hosts, they danced a stately national dance. Then one at the piano struck the opening chords of the Imperial Hymn.

At once all sprang to their feet. There was a thunderous cheer, "Urá! Urá!" from a score of masculine throats; and

^{*}Nobles, Knights, Vikings.

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all with one accord burst forth with inspiring ardor into the chant of that most majestic and thrilling of all national anthems, "*Bozhe, Tsária hrant.*"*

Something clutched at Faith's throat and forced the tears to her eyes, while her heart throbbed heavily, as it always did at the sound of that magnificent hymn, sung stirringly and heartily as Russians know how to sing it, and as she had heard it sung by a thousand manly voices at the opera when "*Zhizn za Tsária*" was being performed. Who could not give his life for the sovereign with such a song resounding in his soul?

"We have no sovereign in my country," thought Faith. "We have to sing to a strip of colored cloth. But yet how gallantly men laid down their lives for the flag in the war for the Union. I mustn't lose my patriotism because this is more romantic and imposing."

At the closing notes of "God Preserve the Tsar," there rose again the enthusiastic shout "Urá! Urá!" Then drinking to the health of their hosts, the masqueraders trooped off merrily to other hospitable doors.

"We are all army fellows here to-night," said Volódia Chernyatin, the Countess' young brother-in-law, who led Faith into the supper room. "Thank God, there is no politics in the army. Where men's lives are consecrated to their country there can be but one idea, the inviolability of Holy Russia, its Throne and its Church. We are its defenders and we have nothing else to think about. I should go mad if I had to discuss politics all day long, fussing at the foundations of everything. Of course, I see the need of reform, of criticism, of a strong public opinion, but it should be only for the sake of maintaining the highest standards. This constant talk of change, change, change, imitating this nation or that nation, whose needs and traditions are entirely different from ours, who are no more

* "God Protect the Tsar."

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free from defects and vices than we are, and are without our special virtues to compensate — bah! It makes me ill! How can Lyóva go into political journalism?"

"But Lyéff Petróvich is a soldier, too," urged Faith. "He is defending the same things that you are, only with different weapons. He defends your institutions from the foes that are within, from false friends. He is a conservative, and as zealously devoted to throne and church and country as any soldier can be."

She flushed quite prettily in her enthusiasm, and the young officer nodded and smiled. "I see! I see! I understand it now," he said.

"What is it you understand, Vladímír Lvóvich?" she asked, puzzled.

"Why excuse me, Vyéra Kárlovna, but I did not quite see till now how Lyéff Petróvich, who is Russian to the marrow of his bones and so staunch for autocracy and orthodoxy, was going to manage with a bride brought up in democracy and non-sectarianism. But I see you are with him heart and soul already."

But before Faith could reply Sergei Milítsyn was calling across the table to Chernyatin, "How are your children coming on, Volódia?"

"Splendidly! They are in the third reader already. And yours, Seriózha?"

"Oh, mine are still in the primer, worse luck!"

Faith stared. She had thought that these young officers were unmarried, and Chernyatin looked far too young to have children in the third reader.

"Six of mine can write famously," announced Nikíta Ryápoloff, and all greeted the announcement with cries of "Good!" As young Prince Ryapoloff was not a day over twenty-two it stood to reason that Faith could not have comprehended aright. She turned to Colonel Suhólm ski, an older officer who sat at her other hand.

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"Permit me, Pável Aleksándrovich. What children are they talking about?" she asked in Russian.

He smiled pleasantly, "We officers are accustomed to call the private soldiers our 'children,'" he explained. "We have very kindly, affectionate relations with them as a rule, and they call even these boy lieutenants their 'little fathers.' Many of the recruits come from remote country districts and can neither read nor write. They are no worse men for that, for the all-wise Lord has made us so that we can have all the Christian virtues in their highest perfection without knowing one letter of the alphabet from another; but everything nowadays is 'progress.' These good-hearted, healthy, pious peasants must be cooped up and taught in the name of Progress to read and write; and the danger is they may learn all the wickedness and irreligion of the world through the cheap newspapers, and be made discontented and desperate. Some of the young officers are interested in teaching their soldiers; and there are fine, intelligent men, like your future husband, who are striving to keep them provided free, or at a very low price, with a class of literature that will be entertaining yet instructive, inspiring the best Russian ideals. I need not tell you what a splendid fellow Lyéff Petróvich is, with his many gifts and ceaseless activities, all devoted to the highest ends."

And Faith felt herself very happy among her lover's friends and admirers.

But Countess Chernyatina was full of misgivings. She had noticed Youri Andrévich's sentimental, melancholy air and whispered conversation with Faith, had seen the momentary gleam of insolence in his eyes, the girl's evident confusion and their long, earnest talk afterward. Older, more experienced women than Faith, and bound by stronger ties, had, under the influence of that same man's glowing eyes and tender manner, forgotten their vows of fidelity and honor. Would the heart of Lyóva's little betrothed

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be able to resist him? And what were his intentions toward her in assuming that air of sentimental melancholy, mingled with audacity, that had, alas! too often been a successful weapon with him in laying siege to frail feminine hearts?

"And he was such an upright lad, so singularly free from the vicious inclinations of youth," she thought, almost tearfully. "But he loved the world and its rewards, and it has corrupted his heart and blinded his eyes. He never had the spirit of self-sacrifice and industry that have kept Lyóva in the straight path."

She decided to speak of her fears to her uncle, but the old prince treated them lightly.

"Our little Vyéra is loyal and upright. I do not anticipate any danger for her," he said. "As for Youri, I admit that he is far from a model man; that in some respects his conduct is detestable, yet he is not entirely without principle. He has never broken an innocent heart, or come between betrothed or happily married couples. In less happy households he is, unfortunately, not so scrupulous, still there are many misdemeanors of which he is wholly incapable."

"But why should such a man be allowed to associate at all with her? Why do we let him come here?"

"We have no ground for denying him the house. He has the right of long-standing friendship to come, and you must remember that, after all, nothing is proven against him. He is in position of a man who is suspected of wrong-doing but not convicted. It is the old parable of the tares and the wheat. You must not root out the tares for fear of injuring the wheat. Society shakes its head and shrugs its shoulders, insinuates much and believes more, but it does not close its doors to him, because to condemn him would be to condemn others with him. For the woman's sake, he must have the benefit of the doubt; and he has shielded well

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the honor of those whom he has found too ready to stoop to dishonor."

"It is cowardly to protect himself in that way behind the good name of a weak woman," said Natália Petróna, contemptuously.

"I do not know any form of sin, however the world may gild or soften it, that is not of ugly aspect," remarked the old prince. "We must hate the sin, but be slow to condemn the sinner, since we can have so little knowledge of what led to his fall. The day of judgment will doubtless reveal much that will make us lenient to poor sinners, and send many of us unexpectedly to a long and severe purgatory."

"The day of judgment will be a very satisfactory occasion in many respects," observed Natália Petróna, dryly, "but it is a long way off. I would like Youri Andrévich to get his purgatory at once here on earth."

"Go pray for him!" suggested her uncle, smiling.

"I cannot. I have not Christian feelings toward him," she replied.

"Without charity the other virtues are nothing," he reminded her, reproachfully.

"The world has far too much charity for him already," she retorted.

Leaving her uncle she sought her brother. She found him looking a little pale, and no wonder, for he was doing double work, occupied in the Imperial Archives from eleven to five daily, and in the printing rooms from nine in the evening till three in the morning. When the hours for necessary sleep and food were deducted, how few remained to him for recreation, and for the society of their young guest!

"Cannot you give more time to Vyéra Kárllovna?" asked his sister.

He looked up quickly, but not in the least apprehensively. "She understands perfectly why I am with her so little. She is not hurt by it."

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"There are others who may try to take advantage of it," she suggested.

He thought a moment, shook his head and smiled contentedly.

"I am not afraid," he said, easily. "Vyéra's little heart is true and staunch, and the boys she meets here are all honorable fellows."

"The one I had in mind is no boy," said Natálie Petróna.

"And he is the most trustworthy of all," he replied. "I know his misdeeds and I regret them as deeply as you can; but in all these years I have never found him other than the soul of chivalry toward the young, and the soul of honor toward his friends. Besides," he added, "you omit the woman in the case,— Yúrochka has my little Vyéra to deal with! If he should so far forget himself as to attempt to win her from me, either now or hereafter, she would very quickly settle him," and he laughed heartily at the thought.

His confidence was inspiring. Natália Petróna's heart felt lighter. She embraced her brother affectionately and begged his pardon for her interference. "I suppose it is true that women, married women especially, have largely themselves to blame. Even 'Georgiy Pobyedonósets' could not be the reputed hero of so many scandals had he met with more rebuffs."

"Oh, have you really found that out?" asked her brother, sarcastically. "A good woman is usually so loyal to her sex that she is blind to the fact that it takes two to make such scandals. We men know a different side of the story. The straightest of us cannot escape direct temptation from members of your sex throughout our whole lives, not alone from the openly unworthy, but often from many seemingly irreproachable. Yet the virtue of a good woman is respected even by libertines, and chivalrously guarded by every man worthy of the name. I venture to say that you, for instance, have gone through

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life practically untempted. Your brother, though striving to avoid it, has met temptation at every turn, while you have met with nothing but profound respect."

"Is it a tribute to my goodness?" she asked. "Good women never know whether their immunity from temptation is owing to the profound respect or — the profound indifference that they inspire."

Then to punish herself for her uncharitable suspicions and generally unchristian feelings she walked over to the Kazánsky Sobór,* lighted a candle before the shrine of the Sorrowing Mother of God,† and said some long, though rather perfunctory prayers for the reclamation of Youri Andrévich.

About a week after the visit of the grand-ducal family, an invitation had come to an informal "at home" from Countess Tyómenskaya, lady-in-waiting to Grand Duchess Vyéra Bogdánova, in her apartment in a wing of the grand-ducal palace.

"That is a little trick the Imperial families have," Solntsoff explained to Faith. "If they send out invitations in their own name there would necessarily be many formalities, and any omissions might give offence. But when the entertainment is given in the name of one of the dignitaries of the Imperial household, then nothing can be said and everything is perfectly informal. You do not have to wear court dress or observe any ceremony."

Faith went with Countess Shumárova, and her two daughters, attended by Volódia Chernyatin and Bórya Kliázemski. Countess Tyómenskaya received her invited guests, about twenty-five in number, in her unpretentious salon and gave them tea. Grand Duchess Vyéra and her brothers, the young Grand Dukes Vsévolod and Youri, were present. Grand Duke Bogdàn came in after tea and played skat in

* Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan.

† In Russia the Blessed Virgin Mary is called *Bogoróditsa*, i. e., Birth-giver of God, or *Bogomáter*, Mother of God, with the prefix "Most-Pure."

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the adjoining card room with some of the fathers and mothers, while the young people joined heartily in merry round-games and charades. Other members of the Imperial family dropped in later in the evening from a state dinner at the Anichkoff palace,* and with them came half a dozen Yunkers and Freylin† with an equerry or two and a stately marshal of the court; but all in most complete informality, every one calling each other by their first names and even nicknames, and the usual spirit of genial, good-natured Russian sociability prevailing. There was a cozy little supper at midnight and then all adjourned, at Grand Duke Bogdàn's suggestion, to the big ballroom of the palace, where they wound up the evening with music and dancing.

Grand Duchess Vyéra had taken Faith to her own room, and had shown her the simply furnished, homelike suite of rooms in which the family lived, the state apartments being used for entertainments only; while Grand Duke Vsévolod spent nearly an hour exhibiting to her his collection of Shakespeariana, and they discussed eagerly their favorite plays and characters. It was all delightfully friendly and simple.

The next interest was the great Mesetski ball in one of the most superb of St. Petersburg's many superb private palaces. The Emperor and Empress and all the court, the ambassadors, and the great dignitaries of the Empire were expected to be present, and to this Faith also received an invitation as the guest of Countess Chernyatina.

"I need a fairy godmother!" she sighed. "How I long to go!"

And presto! A fairy appeared.

Solntsoff had dropped in as usual to see Faith for half an hour before dinner. She never failed to return from her afternoon engagements in time to dress early and be ready

* Residence of the Empress Dowager.

† Pages and maids of honor.

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to meet him. He had been too proud to alter his program in any way, in spite of his sister's fears, too proud to stoop to suspicion of his friend, too proudly confident of Faith. To-day he found her full of excitement.

"I have such a wonderful letter from Uncle Ludlow," she explained. "There are two most astonishing things in it. One concerns this world and the other the next, so we will begin with the next, as more important. Just listen to what he writes!

"My dear Godchild: I was much touched by the letter in which you tell me that you cried on Christmas day because you could not receive the Orthodox Communion with your betrothed. I feel strongly that there should not be this separation. It is not right. Were your future husband to be in England or America, I would gladly receive him to our sacraments as one of ourselves; but, since there is no prospect of this I shall be equally glad to have you, in Russia, receive the sacraments in the Russian Church. See some of their higher clergy and urge them to admit you to the Orthodox Communion as one of themselves. I find nothing in their doctrines that you may not accept, nothing not implicitly held by the advanced Catholic party in the Anglican church."

Faith clapped her hands and looked happily up into her lover's equally happy face. "Lyóva, dear Lyóva, there will now be no least little shadow of separation between us!"

"But, Vyéra," he asked, thoughtfully, "does your uncle understand that in coming into our Church you will have formally to condemn the Anglican Church for having tampered with the Apostolic doctrines and traditions?"

"Oh, Uncle will not mind," declared Faith, joyously. "He says himself, with the utmost frankness, that the Reformers went too far in touching doctrines. The High-Church party is now trying to restore those very doctrines, so he could not possibly object!"

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"Not logically," corrected Solntsoff, "but it is astonishing to see your uncle so logical when it involves the rejection of his claim to have Holy Orders."

"But, now," Faith cried gayly, "let us come down from heaven to earth. You remember, Lyóva, I denied myself a ball gown for our Christmas tree, and, behold my reward! Uncle Ludlow, who never made me a present that I can remember since he gave a silver mug at my baptism, has sent me a check for one hundred dollars! He says I may need it for 'feminine kickshaws.' Query! Is a ball dress a 'kickshaw'? Also, why does he send it at this particular juncture? It was an inspiration. Dear, good uncle! He is my fairy godfather!"

Solntsoff grinned. "I can hardly picture the bishop as a fairy. I think, rather, that it is a peace offering," he suggested. "He is atoning for the discomfort he caused you last spring on my account. He is on his way to visit us here, and then will take you away from me for eight long months. It is well that he should salve over his disagreeable errand in some way. But, Faith, the gown must be yellow, — 'an amber gleam,' as I first saw you."

"I am going to the ball!" said Faith, slowly. "And my prince will go with me in all his splendor. Think! I have never seen you in *mundir*!"

He frowned a little. "I thought Somebody was going to be reasonable, and not expect her stupid, busy old lover to go about with her."

She sighed. "Couldn't you leave your work a little earlier than usual? I want to see you just once in court life, before you give it up."

"I cannot conscientiously leave before the workmen. It is usually long after three o'clock when I am through. Then I have to come home, take a steam bath — I should need it

*Full-dress uniform, pronounced moon-deer.

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— and dress. Oh, even a Peterburg ball would be fairly over by that time.”

She tried not to show her disappointment, but he saw the quiver of suppressed tears. He put his arm about her and drew her close to his side.

“I am sorry to have to lead so much of my life apart from you, but it is a man’s way. After all, are we not happier together at home, than at a ball?”

She looked up a little wistfully. “I am afraid I am very childish,” she said. “I should like to be more to you. Yet I am glad to be part of your life, even if it is a very tiny part.”

“Good heavens! Faith! Little Comrade! Is it possible you do not yet know what you are to me? Have you no conception of how my heart is bound up in you? Listen! Do you think it has been easy for me to lead a life of strict virtue all these years? What is it that has kept me up? A vision of faith! An ideal of womanhood! And just as I was beginning to grow skeptical and bitter and doubtful of God’s grace, you suddenly came into my life. You walked almost into my arms and wholly into my heart, and I was restless and wretched until I had won you. Faith! Faith! If you should prove false, I should go to pieces! It would either kill me outright, or I should go straight to the devil.”

She shook her head. “You are too strong a man for that,” she said, decidedly. “You would be much more likely to go to a monastery. Your religion, your principles, they are what you rely on, and not on the weaknesses and inconsistencies and vacillations of a child like me.”

“I cannot answer for myself. I should not, indeed, lose my faith in God; but my faith in woman’s truth, in the possibility of human virtue, would be shaken to its foundation. I should be bereft of hope, of ideal, of motive. God have pity on my sinful soul in such a day!”

“But I shall be true to you,” protested Faith. “There will

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be no such day! Who would come between us? I have never known any love but you. 'All men beside are to me like shadows!'"

"I could bear it better to lose you by death," he said, sadly. "Then I could still retain my Vision of Faith. But I do not mean to frighten you, Vyéra, my soul." He smiled tenderly and teasingly down at her. "See how absolutely I trust you! I leave you alone, day after day, with all those fascinating young officers in uniform, with a man who is known as the most dangerous flirt in Peterburg, and with a grand duke who hangs on your every word! I am a trusting man, Vyéra."

"Oh, tell me! Is Vsévolod Bogdánovich lazy?" she asked with concern.

He laughed heartily. "He told me about that! He is not exactly lazy, but he is sensitive and easily discouraged. He is mature beyond his years in many ways, a diligent and persevering student up to a certain point. Then suddenly it all seems useless to him. The present political opposition to the grand dukes has cut him deeply. He would serve his country so gladly and disinterestedly! But he says you have shown him there is no one's life not circumscribed in some particulars. It will encourage him to new and more enduring efforts. To be sure," he added, humorously, "I have often told him the same thing, but he receives it with more grace from you!"

The eagerly anticipated ball was a brilliant spectacle. All the cosmopolitan grace and charm of St. Petersburg society was seen there in its greatest distinction. The young married women, exquisitely gowned, graceful and dainty; the girls merry, frank and intelligent; the older women with their courteous air of high-breeding; the big, genial, attractive-looking men in gorgeous uniforms, with their cordiality and gentle charm of manner and their many social accomplishments; the magnificent Louis Quinze

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ballroom, the soft illumination, the flowers, the perfumes, the delicious, rhythmic music, all combined to make an ineffaceable impression on a romantic young spirit. In her new amber satin ball gown, which she felt was the most becoming thing she had ever worn, assiduously waited on and danced with by their own special circle of young officers and diplomats, from time to time presented to men and women of high birth and distinguished career, having two dances each with Grand Duke Vsévolod and the older, but very cultivated and agreeable Grand Duke Grigóri, Faith was excited and happy and in a fair way to have her young head turned with success and pleasure.

But every now and then, in the midst of all the splendor and delights, she would seem to see herself in her simple, everyday dress, standing by the side of Lyéff Petróvich at his table, littered with books and papers. She saw him as he worked, so still, so concentrated, yet withal so eager, his mind clear, orderly, absorbed. She seemed to see the glance of his eye as he looked up at her, to feel the touch of his hand on hers; and the ballroom with its brilliant occupants would vanish, and she would be saying passionately to her lover that he and his work were her world, and this other world was nothing, because he was not in it!

It was when in one of these moods that Dovsprung approached her. Youri Andrévich was a very splendid personage that night. He was one of two officers detailed to conduct the court dances. He had led the mazourka with an Imperial Princess, he had directed the figures of the first cotillon with infinite spirit and grace, he had sat at Their Majesties' table at supper. Now the second cotillon was in full swing, directed by Prince Dalnozórki of the Sem-yónovski Guards, and he was free. He brought his favor to Faith, whose partner was the young Count Sergyéi Mihaílovich Milítsyn.

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"Permit me, Seriózha! With Miss Brandon's leave I will sit out the figure with her."

Dovsprung was still suffering from the violent reaction in his feelings, from the wounded pride of a man who has been deceived in his noblest emotions, whose holiest impulses have led him to disillusion and ridicule. He was hot with an angry instinct to avenge himself, to turn the tables on those who laughed at him. His evil genius had pursued him throughout the evening. It seemed as if every woman he met was possessed to rally him about his new flame. All took it for granted that the little American was in love with him. Some pitied her secret heart-break, others reproved him for trying to win away a friend's bride. Others, more cynical, credited poor Faith with an ambition both to wear the title of princess and to have the most fascinating man in St. Petersburg for her lover. Dovsprung's vanity listened fatuously, though his sense of what was becoming in a gentleman made him murmur various ineffectual remonstrances. "It was not as they supposed. The young lady was an American and did not wear her heart on her sleeve. A purely Platonic friendship! As for himself, honor, friendship forbade. He begged their consideration for the young lady's sake!"

But their words were not without effect. If she were the innocent, loyal child he had once supposed her, would so many observers believe her capable of scheming for Solntsoff's title and his, Dovsprung's love? Well, he would soon find out. The affair was coming to a more interesting stage than he had anticipated. To think that he had ever been so absurdly scrupulous about her!

"Fidès," he said, his brilliant eyes softening to a dreamy melancholy, and a thrill of tense feeling in his subdued tones, "Fidès, since you cared to see it three times, the tale of 'Tristan and Isolde' must have held your sympathy, it must have moved you to pity for the sufferings of a man

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whom fate forced to love the bride of the friend who trusted him. Have you no tear to shed for such unhappy love?"

"You seem to have *Tristan* on the brain. This is the second time you have asked me about it," said Faith, who did not like his tone. "I could not cry because the opera story is stupid. She cared more to be a queen than to be loved; and she did not love *Tristan* for himself but only through a love potion. I have no tears for such love as that."

"You are wise to shed no tears for her," he returned. "She had both her throne and her lover. What more could woman wish? But it is not *Isolde*, it is *Tristan* that you should pity — a man trusted by his friend, bound in honor to that friend's interests, yet loving — despairing," — he broke off. His voice was low and vibrant with emotion, he leaned forward and shaded his eyes with his hand.

There was no answer from Faith, and after a moment he looked up to discover the cause of her prolonged silence.

Among the many uniformed figures in the room scarcely a man was to be seen in the conventional black of civil life. Royalty was present and court-dress was in order. With all her pride in her lover's work and democratic tastes Faith was still childish enough to wish that her prince, also, might appear in picturesque habiliments among the favored ones of the world. Surely there was not a more stately, well-poised form in the room to-night than his would be, if shown off to the same advantage. While Youri Andrévich was uttering his sentimental plaint, she was scrutinizing a man in chamberlain's court dress standing in the doorway with his back to her.

"There," she thought, "is the exact counterpart of Lyóva! Oh, he would look every bit as stunning!"

It was a tall, largely-molded form, about an inch over six feet, clad in green uniform richly embroidered with peacock's feathers, the straight, shapely legs encased in

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close-fitting white trousers and high black boots. A ribbon across the breast was attached to the star of some order, and the embroidered collar bore the insignia of office. Evidently the man held some high position in the Imperial household, and made a striking and distinguished figure.

"He is the exact counterpart of Lyóva," she said again to herself. She could not take her eyes away from him. Perhaps he felt their influence, for he soon turned his face and looked straight at her. It was a fair, strong, clever face, with a pair of keen, pleasant, light-blue eyes, and the mouth, under its long, fair moustache, was curved into a very friendly, merry smile.

Faith's surprise was complete. She was so touched, so pleased, so astonished that she hardly knew whether to laugh or to cry. She looked confused and uncertain, her cheeks paled and flushed alternately.

Dovsprung saw her confusion and change of color and quickly detected the cause, as Solntsov, in his court-dress and insignia as an Imperial chamberlain and master-of-the-palace drew near them. It irritated the melancholy *Tristan* to have his flirtation interrupted, and it irritated him still further to see Faith's confusion and lack of self-control. He arose, however, as Faith rose, and he shook hands most cordially with *Isolde's* betrothed.

"If she colors up and gets so embarrassed every time he catches us together, it will spoil the whole game," he thought angrily, for it was part of his "code of honor" that the other man should have no suspicion that there was any game going on.

Many years earlier there was a time when Dovsprung, before he had become so well-versed in the codes of honor of the World, had sat on the benches of Father Platon's catechism class and had studied another Code of Honor. He had committed to memory and repeated many times "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor anything which

TRISTAN

is his." He had then been a clean, upright lad and an ambitious student. At the same period of his life he had committed to memory many lines of Greek and Latin classics. Since those days he had become a soldier, a courtier, a diplomat, the dead languages were of no advantage to him in modern warfare, in court intrigue, or the social life of the great capitals. Therefore the Latin and the Greek, for want of use, had slipped from his memory; and, together with them, the equally useless, cumbersome and antiquated Hebrew Code of Honor!

CHAPTER XVIII

FIDÈS!

“You will meet with unhappy souls, sunk in corruption, slaves of sin — but, fear nothing! Despite the depths of their degradation you will find in them hidden treasures, precious remains of a good natural disposition, happy inclinations to virtue, traces of religion and faith which will give you more than the hope — the certainty — of their salvation!”

— *Pope Pius X.*

IF FAITH was lost in admiration and delight over the appearance of her lover, he was equally so over his betrothed. Hitherto he had never concerned himself as to whether Faith was pretty or not. He knew that her face was for him the most attractive in all the world, with its noble lines and ever changing expressiveness, eloquent of the charm of mind and heart and character. From the first moment he saw her he had loved her face for what it spoke for. It was to him the window of her soul and as such it was beautiful to him, — “the fairest, that e’er the sun shone on!” He did not ask that the world should agree with him. But to-night she was unmistakably, radiantly pretty. The amber sheen of the long ball gown, with its modestly cut, girlish round-neck, the becomingly arranged hair with tea roses nestling near the face, set off her complexion, heightened the best points and softened the irregularities of her face; and to-night, at least, she was truly a beauty. He acknowledged grudgingly the power of dress. His heart throbbed high with masculine pride and passion. Faith saw the blaze of admiration in his eyes and laughed with pleasure.

“I surrender!” he exclaimed gayly, surveying her approvingly from head to foot. “I do not retract what I

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said about being content with you in sack-cloth, but I admit that full dress does make a difference!"

"Ditto, ditto! Your Splendor!" laughed Faith, making him a sweeping obeisance.

Dovsprung relinquished her to Solntsoff with debonair courtesy, and Faith gleefully felt that her wildest dreams were coming true as Lyéff Petróvich put his hand about her waist and drew her into the waltz.

"Oh, Lyóva," she exclaimed, happily. "Am I really awake, or is it all a dream? Will the clock strike, and shall I find myself back among the ashes and rags of everyday life? Never mind! I have had my dream, I have danced at the ball with my Prince in all his glory! I have enjoyed the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and now I am willing to renounce them forever, provided, of course, that my Prince is with me among the ashes and rags."

"Foolish, romantic girl!" said His Splendor reprovingly; but Faith thought she had never seen him look so happy, so young and so handsome. Then he fetched a sudden sigh. "Ah, Faith! If you knew all this as well as I do, if you saw it all as I do," he said, with a vague gesture toward the brilliant scene and its gay throngs. "It is *this* that seems to me ashes and rags, and it is the little modest home that looks all riches and joy and 'amber gleam!'"

Dovsprung had relinquished Faith with outward grace but inward discontent. "She is overdoing it now," he grumbled. "The idea of raving over that tawdry, civilian outfit of his. It makes him look like a mountebank. The color, too, is unbecoming to his sallow complexion and yellow hair, which, by the way, is getting noticeably thin on top. He will be bald as a billiard ball inside of six years."

His friend, Knyáz Nikoláy Rátmiroff, joined him at the buffet. It was not an easy thing to advise Youri Andrévich,

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but some one must do it, so he took a glass of champagne and braced himself for the occasion.

"Zhénia Vorotinsky says he was attaché for three years at Washington," he remarked, *à propos* of nothing.

"Hard lines!" said Dovsprung, dryly.

"Oh, they came near being too pleasant," laughed Rátmiroff, wondering how he was going to work in his warning, for really he had no story to tell. "It was before his marriage, but he was already betrothed you know, just waiting for promotion. But it seems they have no regular betrothals over there, and they treat their marriage engagements very lightly. Girls, especially, break their engagements as they fancy, and they do not seem to lose caste by it. An American girl seldom marries the first man she accepts but is ready to break with him if a new one she fancies comes along."

"Well?" asked Dovsprung, impatiently, putting up his monocle and staring the ingenuous Rátmiroff out of countenance. "How did that affect Evgéní Vasílievich* so pleasantly?"

"Devil take Zhénia! I am only thinking about you, Yúrochka," said honest Rátmiroff, confusedly. "You are a man of honor and you respect betrothal, but if — if the — the other, doesn't, and should break it off, why ——"

Dovsprung dropped his monocle. "My dear Kólya, I never knew you to tell so pointless a story," he remarked, carelessly. "That last glass of champagne must have gone to your tongue. When you can recall what happened to Vorotinsky, I am ready to listen to you, but not while you talk such balderdash."

"Yes, I may be a little drunk," admitted Nikoláy Arkádievich, who was perfectly sober and much relieved to get off so easily. After all, he had said the important thing, and to a wise fellow like Yúrochka a word is sufficient.

Youri Andrévich danced unremittingly for the remainder

*Eugene, son of Basil, pronounced Yeff-gay-nee.

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of the free dances and was his usual gay, gallant self, but at intervals Kólya Rátmiroff's warning words came back to disturb him. Truly, it had not seriously occurred to him that Fidès might break her engagement with Solntsoff for his sake. Now, all at once it seemed to him the most probable thing in the world.

Even if he wished to marry her, it would gravely affect his reputation as a man of honor to have broken up a friend's betrothal. But he had now not the slightest desire to marry her, yet he would be forced in honor to do so, or would lose caste still more seriously. Solntsoff probably foresaw this outcome and would not regret it. Perhaps it was with design, even, that he had permitted his betrothed to receive attentions from other men so freely. Dovsprung felt that both had dealt falsely with him and that he need have no scruples of conduct toward either. Of course Fidès had fallen in love with him, — every one saw that. And she had been clever enough to find out that Lyéff Petróvich, in spite of his rank and high connections, was a poor match. Well, she must be made to understand at once, in the very plainest terms, that breaking her engagement was not to be dreamed of, that it would be social ostracism for them both, that he did not wish it, either for his own sake or hers. As she was so infatuated with him, there might be tears and a threatened scene, but — well, he would know how to convince her of his love and devotion, and console her with the possibility of a future happiness. But there was not a moment to be lost in making her comprehend the situation, and in tenderly persuading her to accept the only possible solution.

Had he taken time for reflection he might have come to see more clearly, his better nature might yet have triumphed, but his opportunity came that very night. In consequence of a slight accident to the *dezhurny kamerger*,* Chamberlain

* i.e., Chamberlain on duty.

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Prince Solntsoff was detailed just before the close of the ball to attend Grand Duchess Yevgénia Ivánovna. Dovsprung happened to be waiting on Countess Chernyatina at supper, when her brother came to arrange her return home. He offered at once to accompany the ladies in his sledge and be responsible for their safe arrival at the palace. Lyéff Petróvich accepted his offer with cordial gratitude, but Natália Petróvna showed a certain reserve which increased Dovsprung's irritation.

"She has been watching me as a cat watches a mouse for a week past," he muttered to himself, "but I shall know how to outwit her. It is pity she is so changed. I can remember when she was a very attractive, frank, good-natured young woman, and now she is as narrow-minded, jealous and suspicious as any old maid."

His sledge followed that of the ladies closely and, when they reached the Kliázemski palace, he sprang out and helped them to alight.

The big Swiss* in his laced uniform threw open the gates and they passed into the reception room on the rez de chaussée, where they were taking off their furs, when a maid came down in some excitement to speak to the countess, who hastily excused herself, saying that one of the children seemed to be ill and she must go at once to the nursery.

Faith felt a sudden embarrassment at finding herself alone with Dovsprung. She knew that she was awkward and blushing, and was provoked with herself; but somehow he seemed different to-night from what he had ever been before. She wondered whether she ought not to dismiss him and follow the countess, and she remained standing, undecided what to do.

Her trepidation and confusion were quickly observed by

*The uniformed hall-porter or janitor in Russian palaces and hotels is called "the Swiss."

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her companion, who believed that the moment had come for a tender explanation.

"Ah, Fidès! Fidès!" he murmured, with melancholy earnestness. "You, too, are agitated. Do you understand at last? Are your beautiful eyes opened to see into my troubled heart and to know that this trouble — is love?"

Faith stared at him, too astonished at first to find words. Then she grew more embarrassed than ever. What did such a speech mean from a man of the world like Dovsprung? She was so inexperienced! It would be a dreadful blunder to take him too seriously. He was a flirt and perhaps thought to flatter her with unmeaning sentimentalities; in that case she would wish to show him that she disliked such silly talk. On the other hand, they had been much together of late, and he might really have come to love her, hopelessly indeed, yet in perfect honor. If so she ought to be very sorry for him and very, very kind to him.

That she was silent and confused, that she did not at once reject him, served to give him insolent confidence. "Fidès, have you not seen that I loved you from the first moment we met?" he whispered, eagerly. "Ah, do not remind me that you are betrothed. My God! Do I ever forget it? Your promise is given to another, and you must fulfil it at whatever cost. In honor I cannot ask, for your own sake you cannot do otherwise. But love! Love and happiness! Oh, Fidès, is it necessary you should be deprived of these?"

"I — I don't quite understand you, Graf von Dovsprung," stammered Faith. His manner, though tender, was still perfectly reverential; but his words sounded suspiciously like an insult, as if he were saying, "Marry Solntsoff, but accept me for your lover!" Oh, it would be too terrible to suppose that he meant anything like that! Could it be possible that he fancied her in love with himself? Tears of shame and anger rushed to her eyes. "I don't under-

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stand you," she repeated, "and I think you do not understand me. I could not marry without love, — it would be a false loyalty — but I — I ——"

She hesitated. It was so difficult to express to a stranger the depth of her love and loyalty to her betrothed!

He smiled cynically. She understood him well enough. He could see through that baby-faced surprise and tearful hesitation. She was evidently on the verge of a scene. It must be averted, and the situation must be cleared beyond any possible doubt.

"There is but one disloyalty," he replied, his glowing, brilliant eyes looking full into her timid, inquiring ones. "Be loyal to love! That is the supreme fidelity. It is true that you will have to marry Solntsoff. It is the only way out. Anything else would ruin us both socially. But, after — after —" He snatched her hand and pressed it passionately to his breast. "Love cannot be bound! Only have the courage to love as your heart bids you, and I am your slave for life."

There was no misunderstanding him now, no fear of misjudging him! She started back, drawing her hand hastily away from him. Her eyes, still gazing into his, were big with astonishment and pain.

"Why! Why, Graf von Dovsprung!" she stammered, slowly, incredulously. "This cannot, cannot be you!"

He, too, had started back. In the shock, the grief, and the distress of her sweet face he saw unmistakably revealed all her innocence and truth.

For one moment Dovsprung's only feeling was an insane joy, a wild triumph! His lost ideal was found again! This was the vanished Backfisch! Fidès, who was dead, was now alive again! He felt as if he must shout it aloud in mad rejoicing. Fidès, his illusion, was a living reality!

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Then a slow, benumbing horror crept over him. He had spoken dishonoring words to her! To Fidès! He turned very white, dumb with sudden agony.

"Oh, no, no! It cannot be you," she said again, very low, in a half-dazed, wondering way. "He said you were a man of honor, that I could trust you. I liked you and thought you respected me."

"Fidès! God knows that I respect you, that your innocence is sacred to me," he exclaimed, hoarsely, finding words at last. "Do you think I could harm a hair of your head? Why, Backfischly, I would not permit you to do wrong even if it were possible to suppose that you could wish to do so."

"Have I been unjust!" she asked in puzzled, half-apologetic tone. "Forgive me, but what else could I think! What would you have thought of a man who spoke in that way to your betrothed, to your little sister?"

And as he stood there gazing into her young face with its great, sad eyes and quivering lips, so sorrowful and appealing, so shrinking and reproachful, he grew paler and paler till his countenance was ghastly.

"I should have called him a contemptible hound!" he muttered at last. "I would have shot him dead!"

He bit his lips and turned his face away. "O my God! What have I said! What have I done!" he groaned, his head bowed down in an anguish of regret. "I have been blind, blind, blind! And I thought myself a man of honor!"

What apology, what explanation could he make to this exquisite child, how tell her that he had indeed thought she could find consolation in sinful love? He could not lift his eyes to her face.

"Fidès, do not condemn me!" he urged, low and hurriedly. "I cannot explain; you would not understand; but it was a mistake, a terrible mistake! Forget my words; I did not know! I—I am not a good man, but I am not

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He laughed indulgently. "I can imagine you must have given horrible scandal!" he said, ironically. "The weight on your conscience must be something appalling!" But she did not smile, and her eyes were still earnest and troubled.

"What do you do?" she repeated.

He grew grave at once. "If it is something definite that you can beg pardon for, I would do so. But I fancy you mean something indefinite, intangible, that it would be worse to explain than to ignore. In that case, simply try to correct the impression by your future actions and words, and meantime say a prayer for the others that they may come to see it differently. Then leave their souls to God and be at peace."

She smiled up at him. "My big, best friend!" she whispered, contentedly; but she did not confide in him the cause of her troubled inquiry, nor did he seek to learn it of her.

Going to her room a moment later Faith found the countess there.

"I told your Babette not to sit up," she said. "My Dunia is with Alyósha, who is sleeping comfortably, so I will be your maid."

"You are all so good to me," sighed Faith, gratefully, "yet you must often think me very unfit to be Lyóva's wife. But I love him and him only, with all my heart and soul, if that is any recommendation for me."

The countess looked immensely pleased and relieved. "That is a very important point, little dove," she replied affectionately. "I admit I was a bit disappointed at first to have him choose a mere child, not of our race or religion, but I soon saw that it was the best thing that ever happened to him."

"How can that be?" asked Faith, wonderingly.

"It has softened him marvelously to watch over your mental and spiritual development, to deal tenderly with your youth and inexperience. He needed just that soften-

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ing. The defects of his character lay in a certain severity, impatience and self-sufficiency. He has educated and improved himself at the same time that he is educating you, and he knows it."

"Perhaps," said Faith, thoughtfully, "he is really happier in helping and teaching me, than if I had come to him ready-made, with all the virtues and graces?"

"I think so, dear," said the sister, pleasantly, as she unfastened the amber gown and removed the ornaments from neck and hair. "It is his nature to want to do good, to seek activities rather than rest. He is eager to be a true and helpful friend to those he loves. The only fear is that he will try to do too much, and not leave you liberty enough. You may find him a bit of a tender tyrant."

"I am afraid I need a tyrant. I make such blunders," sighed Faith. She hesitated and hung her head. "Dear sister, Natásha," she said, "you caught me crying and must have divined something. I ought to explain."

"I guessed that Youri Andrévich had somehow offended you and I feared at first that you had fallen in love with him and were unhappy."

"I am afraid he thought so, too," said Faith. "I don't know what I have done to give you all that impression. My only comfort is he seemed to feel so sorry. I could not be angry, for he humbled himself so deeply that it disarmed me completely."

"But, Vyéra, if Youri loves you he is hardly to be blamed for making an effort to win you. Of course, betrothal is a very serious thing and not easily to be broken, and it is not considered honorable to try to win away another man's bride; but, after all, betrothal vows are not final, like those of marriage. You are still free. There is no real wrong in it if he wanted you to marry him."

Faith grew scarlet but made no reply.

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"Vyéra," cried the countess, with sudden suspicion, "tell me all! As your sister, your hostess and matron, I ought to know all."

"He did not ask me to marry him," said Faith in a low, shamed voice. "He wanted me just — to love him."

Natália Petrónna turned pale. "Vyéra, what do you mean?" she cried, faintly. "Youri Andrévich is — is — incapable" — she almost choked. "Oh, no! no! He is not so bad as that! It is a mistake!"

"That is what he, too, said," explained Faith, distressed. "But how was I to know? I have bungled it dreadfully, somehow! I suppose he fancied, just as you did, that I was in love with him and ready to break my engagement for his sake. He said I must keep my word and marry Lyóva, and then, he thought it would console me — to say, we could love — after ——"

Natália Petrónna burst into tears. "Little Vyéra," she sobbed, "to think that you, Lyóva's darling, and a little motherless stranger, should have been so insulted — in our house — in our Russian home — by a friend whom we all trusted! We knew he was not a man of principle in certain ways, but we never, never dreamed — we had known so many instances of his knightly chivalry toward the young and the thoughtless that we never supposed — Oh, Vyéra, forgive us for protecting you so poorly! We have loved him all our lives; he was like a brother in our childhood; but he shall never, never show his face among us again!"

"But," hesitated Faith, "I have asked him to come, and he said he would."

"Come to this house, where he has defied the laws of hospitality and friendship?"

"Oh," pleaded Faith, "I do not wish him to know that I told! Neither Lyóva nor your uncle must suspect! I

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had to tell you, for I am your guest and you saw me in trouble, but can it not be our secret?"

"Of course, dear heart! Your confidence shall be sacred to me. You shall have your way. And, indeed, it may be the best way."

Faith put her arms around the older woman and tried to comfort her. But after she had returned to her own room Natália Petróvna's grief and wrath broke out afresh. "He dare not come!" she thought. "Such conduct was nothing short of damnable. Yes, that is the only word, — damnable! Holy Scripture says it were better for a man that a millstone were hanged round his neck and he were drowned in the bottom of the sea, than that he scandalize the innocent! O, Youri, Youri! Friend of our childhood!"

While his betrothed and his sister opened their hearts to each other, Solntsoff dismissed his sledge and with his cloak well wrapped about him walked to his bachelor-rooms in the chill of the early morning air. He was gratified with the success of his little surprise for Faith, and the pleasant light deepened in his blue eyes as he recalled her childish joy and admiration.

"I wonder what her little scruple is?" he mused. "She reproaches herself for something said or done in the innocence of her heart, or, perhaps, some bit of unkind gossip or criticism has come to her ears and pained her. She does not tell me what it is; she is fighting her little battle alone; probably for fear of hurting me if I learn that she has had any unpleasant experience in our Russian society. Poor child! Society is much the same all the world over,— a little more charm and polish in one capital, a little more gayety and glitter in another, a little more extravagance and ostentation in a third, but everywhere the same old world, flesh and devil. I am not sorry she should be disenchanted, though I regret that anything happened to spoil her enjoyment of this special evening."

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A sudden thought struck him. He stood stock still and his face seemed turned to stone. His hands were clenched tight.

"I left her happy at the ball,—Youri Andrévich escorted her home!"

He pulled himself together with an effort and strode on.

"He is not a man of principle, but he is at least a man of honor," he told himself. "He would not break his code of honor, such as it is, with me, who have been his friend from boyhood, or with one for whom he has such romantic veneration as Vyéra Kárllovna.

"But even if he were to fail," he continued, throwing back his head with a proud, confident smile, "I should not know how to be jealous! If he has offended Vyéra in any way I could not trust myself to keep from his throat. There would be murder in my heart—but no jealousy! Youri Andrévich may make love to her till doomsday and it will never give me one moment's pang or anxiety. I know the loyal, loving heart of her in whom I have placed my faith!"

CHAPTER XIX

REPARATION

"I ask no boon, no guerdon, save the right
To give my love, my life, myself to thee,
To love thee without hope of love's return —
To walk through life transfigured by the light
Of the pure flame that in my heart doth burn,
Ethereal, pure, exultant."

— *Holmes.*

THREE days passed and Dovsprung had not come to the palace nor did Faith meet him elsewhere, for she availed herself of the excuse of Alyósha's slight indisposition to keep quietly at home. Countess Chernyatina was much in the nursery and Faith sat with the old prince, discussing the newspapers with him and helping him to entertain the many visitors who dropped in on him daily. She was glad to have this interest and diversion, for she was still greatly agitated by her experience and there was no one to whom she could speak of it.

"Natália Petróvna is already so sensitive and unhappy about it; and I cannot tell Lyóva or the old prince, for there would be a duel and the wrong one would be shot! Oh, dear! What had I done to make Youri Andrévich think I was infatuated with him?"

But her conscience absolved her. However friendly and pleasant she had been to a very agreeable and accomplished man, there was nothing but his own vanity and perverted nature that could misconstrue anything in her past manner. None of the other men with whom she had been on equally pleasant terms had misunderstood her or

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presumed in the slightest on her friendliness. They had been wholly gentlemanly and delightful.

On the afternoon of the third day after the Mesetski ball, Prince Kliázemski was sitting propped up in the armchair of his private library when the lackey announced:

"Colonel Graf von Dovsprung asks to see your Illustrious Highness in a private interview."

"Certainly, with pleasure! Show him in!" said the surprised prince.

A moment later Dovsprung entered, a fine, dashing figure in his picturesque uniform and glittering decorations. He bowed low. The old prince held out his hand.

"Welcome, Yurochka, how are you?" he said, cordially.

But the young man drew back. "I am not sure you will wish to take my hand when you know my errand," he said.

"I was wondering what brought you. Now I wonder still more."

Dovsprung bowed again. "I have come to present myself as a suitor for the hand of your nephew's betrothed!"

"Indeed!" remarked the old man, frowning. "That is certainly a surprising, an unusual proceeding. Among men of honor — and you, Graf, are a man of honor according to the world's codes — it is not customary to try to win the bride of a friend, unless indeed you have strong reasons to believe the lady desirous of being so won."

"I may have had the folly to think so for a moment, but now I have every reason to believe her happy in her engagement and that she will refuse me."

"I confess I am mystified, Graf," and the old prince peered searchingly into the young man's face. It looked somewhat pale and drawn, and the usually bold, brilliant eyes were clouded and full of embarrassment; but his bearing was as ever erect, spirited, elegant.

"I do not know that I can make your Highness see it from

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my point of view," he said, with some hesitancy, "but I will try. I will first ask you, Vladímír Pávlovich, to forget that you are Lyóva's uncle, and remember only that you are the young lady's host and temporary guardian, responsible for her peace of mind and happiness while she is your guest." He paused and a scarlet flush rose in his cheeks and brow.

"I was deeply attracted by Vyéra Kárllovna from the first," Dovsprung continued, low and hurriedly. "I found interest and fascination in studying the heart of so intelligent and lovely a child, and I wondered at the strong hold she had over my lawless spirit. For a time I was wholly true to my friendship for Lyéff Petróvich and worshiped her as something quite apart from ordinary human desires. Then, in an evil hour, my wretched vanity listened to false tongues who whispered to me that she was neither as young nor as unsophisticated as I believed her to be, that she was not indifferent to me, that she was playing a double game with Lyéff Petróvich and myself. I believed she would break with him, if she could win me. I did not wish to marry her under these conditions and was so blinded by my own folly as to suppose that, if she could not win me as a husband, she could be consoled by me as a lover."

"And you spoke words of insult to that child!" thundered the old man, half rising from his chair.

"Oh, my God!" groaned Dovsprung, mopping his brow.

"When and where was it?" demanded the prince, hoarsely.

"Here, in this house, the night after the Mesetski ball."

"In my home, the home of your father's friend, who trusted you?"

"Believe me, Knyáz," said the younger man, brokenly, "I had no deliberate purpose of offending against hospitality and honor. I thought only of extricating myself from a difficult situation for which I held Lyóva partly to blame; and I—I mistook the woman I was dealing with. But

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in her troubled eyes I saw in a flash the whole hideousness of my proposal. She scarcely understood me, but she feared the truth — that I wished her to marry Lyóva, but to love me, and that such a wish was an insult. Knyáz, I have spent three days and nights of agony! I have seen the full loathsomeness of my conduct as it must appear to her innocent eyes, the insult to her womanhood, the treachery to my friend, the dishonor to myself, the sin before God, the whole long list of past transgressions that have gradually blinded and perverted my judgment till I could fall so far below my own poor codes of honor, such as they were.”

“I oppose the term ‘honor’ to that of ‘principle,’” said the old man sternly. “I recognize no honor but that founded on the laws of God and man. But, I can see in your face that you have suffered. Such a moral awakening is indeed agony, a passing through death to the light.”

“Had it not been the act of a coward and an infidel, I would have blown out my miserable brains. But I think you will agree with me, Vladímir Pávlovich, that, for her sake, I cannot leave the matter as it stands. However despicable I may appear in her eyes, still no young girl can be happy in thinking that any man holds her in light esteem. No explanation, no apology would suffice to remove the impression of an intended insult. The only way to convince her of my respect is to lay my life and all that I have at her feet. I love her now as I never dreamed I could love anything on earth. If I must choose between injuring Lyéff Petróvich, or leaving her to feel insulted and unhappy, then I choose to injure him. Vladímir Pávlovich, I beg of you, let me make her an honorable offer of marriage! Let me prove to her my honest affection and veneration. Then when she shall have refused me, I stand ready to offer her betrothed any satisfaction he may desire. My life is a small thing to give, if he requires it.”

The old prince stroked his beard thoughtfully. “I do,

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indeed, see it from your point of view, Youri Andrévich. We must think only of her, of her happiness and peace of mind. I believe you are right in feeling that she would be happier if she could be assured of your reverence, of the homage of a man to the woman he most honors and loves. But, Graf, in order that such an offer should not be an act of treachery on one hand, or a mere mockery on the other, it is necessary that her betrothed shall consent to it and shall release her from her promise to him."

Dovsprung started and exclaimed, "But how can that be? Lyóva will never do that!"

"Leave it to me, Graf. I shall not violate your confidence, but my nephew will trust me and will do as I tell him without question. Also, if your proposal is to be more than a mere empty form, I must ask you if you are indeed in a position to present yourself as a suitor for her hand. Youri Andrévich, as before Heaven, are there no entanglements, no obstacles that stand between you and that innocent girl?"

"Knyáz, I cannot undo the past, I cannot say I am worthy where I know myself to be most unworthy, but at least I am free. I was off with my last — er — flirtation, — let me call it so, — before I met her, and since that time have felt an aversion to such pursuits that I could hardly account for. It amazed me at first to notice it, but now I see in it the leading of my good angel. Upon my oath, Knyáz, there are no obstacles to an honorable and a happy marriage."

"And the future? Can you be a faithful husband? Are not flirtation and intrigue second nature with you? There must be no question of breaking her heart."

Dovsprung looked steadily into the old man's eyes.

"Even if she reject me, Knyáz, the future shall be different from the past. In these hours of mental anguish I have taken my resolves."

"And you can provide for her? You have no debts?"

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You know that she has practically no dowry — only a few hundred rubles of pocket money?"

"I have no debts," he replied. "I have had some extravagances, I have gambled in moderation, but I have always managed to live within my income. I have done well with my estate. I can make a fair settlement upon her."

"And you are prepared to make your offer at once?"

"At once! I put myself at your Highness's disposal."

The prince touched an electric bell at his side, and in a moment a footman appeared at the door.

"Has Knyáz Lyéff Petróvich come in?"

"Yes, your Highness. His Grace is with the ladies in the drawing-room."

"Ask him to come to me at once on important business."

In another moment they heard a light, rapid footstep crossing the ante-room, the door opened and Solntsoff entered, bowed courteously to both men and advanced cordially to embrace Dovsprung.

"Hold, Lyóval!" called the uncle, sharply, "I have something to say to you first." The young man came and stood by his uncle's chair, bending affectionately over him.

"I have given permission to Youri Andrévich to make an offer of marriage to the young lady who is my guest and your betrothed bride!"

Solntsoff straightened himself up and raised his eyebrows inquiringly. He did not as much as glance toward Dovsprung, who stood with folded arms, impassive as a statue. The old prince laid his hand on his nephew's.

"For the moment I take the place of a father to the young lady, and I wish her to be perfectly free to accept or reject this offer. Therefore, it is necessary that you should release her from her promise to you, otherwise the offer would be a mere mockery."

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"Never!" exclaimed Solntsoff. "That would be treating her promise to me as a mere mockery."

"Nevertheless, as her guardian I ask you do so."

Solntsoff drew himself up to his full height. There was a steely glitter in his blue eyes, and the mouth looked obstinate.

"It would seem to be testing her loyalty, and I feel that it needs no test," he replied, proudly.

"Trust me, Lyóva!" said his uncle, gently. "I know the circumstances and you do not. If you believe her loyalty needs no test, you will be indifferent to going through this formality. For my own honor, as her host and guardian, for the sake of her possible happiness and peace of mind, and in justice to a man who is trying to act honorably under difficult circumstances, I again ask you to consent to his proposal and set her free."

"Oh!" replied Solntsoff, with a careless shrug of the shoulders, "I will play my part in a farce if it will oblige you, my Uncle. But understand, it is for your sake only. I cannot conceive that it can be for Vyéra's sake, and," contemptuously, "there is no one else who has any right to be considered."

"There is no one who claims a right to be considered, Lyéff Petróvich," said Dovsprung in a low, firm voice, now speaking for the first time since Solntsoff's entrance. "I do not ask for justice. I am considering her alone. Afterward it will be your right to deal justice to me."

Slowly, unwillingly, Solntsoff turned and looked at his rival. He heard the voice of his uncle saying, "This is no farce in which I ask you to play a part. It is more nearly a tragedy." And looking into the gloomy, passionate eyes of the man before him, from whom every trace of his usual gallant, debonair bearing had fled, Solntsoff began to feel that this was, indeed, something more than the piece of unparalleled effrontery and treachery he had first thought it.

"When the scene is over, it may yet turn into a tragedy,"

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said Dovsprung. "Lyéff Petróvich, I said to your uncle and I repeat to you — I stand ready to give you every satisfaction."

Solntsoff crossed over to the fire and, leaning against the mantel, stood for a moment in deep thought. Then he said, slowly, "I am absolutely in the dark. I cannot express a judgment. I cannot follow my first impulse, for my uncle speaks of his own honor, and of consideration for one I love. Let my uncle, then, decide my course toward you, and let Vyéra Kárllovna decide for her own happiness. I place myself unreservedly in their hands."

"We will send for Vyéra Kárllovna and have this over at once," said the old prince, and his voice sounded weak and tired.

Solntsoff hurried to his side. "This is too much for you, Uncle. Let Youri Andrévich see Vyéra in the drawing-room, or my sister's salon."

"No, no! I wish it here," said the old prince, testily. "I am the only one who can explain it to her."

Solntsoff poured out a little stimulant for his uncle, who soon revived and apologized for the infirmities of his age.

"My presence at least is not necessary," said Solntsoff, as they heard Faith's step approaching. "I can be spared this scene."

"I beg you will stay. Believe me, it is best," cried Dovsprung, hastily.

Faith pushed open the door and peeped in. She was always pleased when Prince Kliázemski sent for her, and was looking forward to a pleasant hour of his wise, humorous conversation. What she saw startled her.

Opposite the door stood the superb figure of Graf von Dovsprung in the magnificence of white and scarlet uniform, sable furs and numerous decorations. To the left, stretched on his reclining chair, wrapped in his velvet, fur-trimmed robe, lay the old prince looking pale and agitated. Far to the

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right, by the fireplace, stood Lyéff Petróvich, in his plain, civilian clothes, trying with all his might to look indifferent, but succeeding only in looking cross and restless. She felt that something serious was before her. Was it possible that Youri Andrévich had been misrepresenting her in some way to these noble men? Her heart began to beat in hot indignation, her lips to curl proudly.

"Come here, my child," said the invalid gently, and she stood by his chair, while he took her hand kindly in his.

"The Count von Dovsprung, Vyéra, has come to me, very openly and honorably, to ask permission to make you an offer of marriage." Faith started and grew pale. "I am convinced that he loves and honors you with great sincerity and disinterested devotion, and that he will make you a faithful and adoring husband. I wish you to be perfectly free to consider his offer in good faith, and have therefore asked your betrothed to release you from the promises of marriage you have made him, which he loves you generously enough to do without reserve."

Faith gave a little exclamation and looked over at Soln-tsoff; but he evaded her eye, and, drawing her ring from off his finger, laid it on the centre table. It seemed to Faith as if the world was coming to an end. Her Prince, her "Fair-Sun," releasing her from her engagement! Lyóva giving her back her betrothal ring! She wanted to rush to him and throw herself in his arms, but delicacy and a feeling of consideration for Dovsprung kept her back.

"Speak for yourself, Youri Andrévich!" said the prince.

Dovsprung came and stood before her. "I need not tell you, Fidès," he said, in low tones thrilled with emotion, "that it has been a struggle between my overwhelming love for you, the most sacred and exalted feeling of my whole life, and my debt of friendship to the noble, splendid fellow you are — were engaged to. If I have taken a step that must pain him and seem to the world dishonorable, it is because

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I wish that he, as well as you, should know that the feeling you have inspired me with has made a changed man of me. Your eyes have looked into the darkest depths of my soul, and in the light of their pure glance I see myself as I never did before. I have much to redeem in my life to make it grow toward those ideals which you revere; but, if you could love me, Fides, if you would be my wife, God knows how passionately and faithfully I would cherish you. If you reject me, I can only realize my unworthiness, and try to make my future measure up to the height of the love and reverence I bear you."

Faith listened to him, gazing into his face with eager, glowing eyes. Oh, thank God! All was right again! His love was no longer an insult to her and a shame to himself, it was now a love that honored them both, a love that promised to redeem him from an unworthy past, a love that was the most beautiful homage that a man could pay or a woman desire, since it was the redemption of his unbelieving soul through reverence for her purity and truth. Oh, thank God for His mercy to them both!

"Vyéra," said the old prince, with great seriousness. "You have a choice to make, and one that will be painful to your gentle heart. For both of these men love you, yet only one can be made happy by you. The other must take from your hand the bitter cup of disappointment and life-long sorrow. I say life-long, for they are neither of them impulsive boys, carried away by youthful passion, but are mature, strong, experienced men, who from their natures must love strongly and constantly. Whichever way, then, you decide, one of the two must suffer. The only point for you to consider in making your choice is your own future good. Give yourself to the one at whose side you can best meet the joys and sorrows of married life, the one who is best fitted to guide you in its duties and trials."

Only one idea filled Faith's mind, — how to make her

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rejection of Youri Andrévich as easy as possible to him, to spare him pain, to assure him that she appreciated the motives that had urged him to make her this offer, that she pardoned and understood him and was grateful for his homage to her womanhood. With tenderly smiling face, with glistening eyes and outstretched hands, she stepped eagerly toward von Dovsprung.

On two of the men the effect of her movement was like an electric shock. The old prince looked thunderstruck. He sat up and grasped the arm of his chair, while his breath came and went hard.

Lyéff Petróvich turned yellow. Something clutched at his very vitals, he grew cold, his head reeled, he felt a deadly nausea, and it seemed as if the room went round and round with him. He grasped the mantel for support and stared starkly at the two figures in the centre of the floor.

But the third man made no mistake. He knew why the tenderhearted girl came to him first, and what she would have to say to him. He advanced to meet her.

She spoke to him with bent head and very softly, for what she had to say was for him alone. He had to stoop to catch her half-whispered words.

"I want you to know that I understand, that I am very, very grateful to you for speaking in this way to me to-day, and very, very thankful that your feeling for me is no longer a temptation, but a help and an inspiration to you. I shall be happier all my life for knowing this. It seems very beautiful to me that it is so, and I thank God for it, and beg Him to bless you and make you happy in some other, better way than what you ask for, but which you know cannot be."

"Fidès," he said, low and hurriedly, "you have understood me. You have seen all the vileness of my heart. You know that your life was not meant to mate with such as mine. You have ever clung to one who is worthier of you. You are right! On my wretched life hangs a heavy cloud

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of blackness and shame and treason. I thought I was serving my country, and I was only serving my selfish interests. I dared call myself a Christian, and I have been crucifying my Saviour. I believed myself a man of chivalry and honor, a respecter of all that was holy and innocent, but I have scandalized one of God's little ones, and it were better for me that I were drowned in the depths of the sea!" His head dropped to his breast with anguish. Then he raised it again and leaned imploringly toward her.

"Fidès, will not you assure me that your life has not been embittered, nor your spirit prejudiced by my offences? Do not judge beloved Russia by this her unworthy son. Remember only that your betrothed is also her child! Do not condemn my Mother Church because I have been a traitor. Remember only that the Divine Christ was none the less divine though there was a Judas among his apostles. May God accept my miserable life in payment for all its treacheries!"

"Oh, do not call yourself a Judas, Youri Andrévich!" interrupted Faith. "Oh, no! No! Say rather, a Prodigal Son — a prodigal, indeed, but yet a son, who has come back, repentant, to his Father's home!"

"You can so care what becomes of me, Fidès? You, who know me as I truly am, you, whom I have so offended? You do not utterly condemn me? You believe I can redeem myself?"

"How can I not care? How can I forget God's mercy to us both, and how nobly your heart and your conscience have responded to His voice! All you have said and done to-day has made you very dear to me. I shall always care what becomes of you, and shall never forget." Unconsciously she raised her voice in her earnestness. "I do believe in you, I do hope for your redemption! You have my love and confidence forever."

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Impulsively, she placed her hands in his. He threw himself on his knees before her.

"May God forever bless you for your goodness to me, Fidès!" he exclaimed, holding her hands tightly clasped against his breast, "to me, most unworthy but, Heaven knows, most grateful!"

His eager words rang through the quiet room and struck as with a bolt the hearts of the two men intently listening.

There was a moment's hush, a stillness, breathless, tense. Then without cry or warning came the sound of a heavy fall.

Lyéff Petróvich lay stretched at length upon the floor, white, senseless, motionless.

CHAPTER XX

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“He shall never again, though he wander by many a stream,
No, never again shall he meet with a flower that shall seem
So sweet and pure, and forever in after years
At the thought of its bloom, or the fragrance of its breath,
The past shall arise —
And his eyes shall be dim with tears,
And his soul shall be far in the gardens of Paradise —
Though he stand in the shambles of Death!”

It is a long, slow, uncertain journey back from the land of oblivion. One does not awaken in a moment to consciousness and power of movement, as from sleep. Into the heavy, motionless body the mind slowly gropes its way back, finding its bearings with difficulty. From a vast distance, through a dark, thick atmosphere, there came to the dulled brain of the man who lay still and white, with closed eyes, upon the couch, the vague, dreamy recognition of a human voice saying somewhere, to somebody, many miles away:

“He is coming to, nicely.”

Solntsoff heard the voice, but it left him indifferent. Sometime, perhaps, he might be interested to know what had occurred, but just at present he would like to sleep. What were they doing to him? It could not be that he was in church, yet there was chanting and lights, people were moving about him and touching him. If it were not too much trouble, he would open his eyes to see what they were about. At any rate he would ask them not to disturb him. With a huge effort he lifted up his voice and called out peremptorily, “Let me alone! I am all right!”

“His lips are moving; he is trying to speak,” said the

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voice he had heard before, but this time it was so close to his side, so strong and distinct, that it almost made him jump. Then he became angry.

"They must be deaf, if they did not hear me," he thought. "I fairly shouted. They ought to listen more attentively. I will tell them so after a while."

The chanting had ceased, the lights were gone. He felt gentle fingers stroking his head, tender arms clinging about his neck. This was very, very pleasant. It did not disturb him in the least.

"His pulse is fine. He is quite himself again. You may speak to him now," said the voice he had heard before, which he this time recognized as that of the family physician.

"My soul! My golden one! My Prince Fair-Sun!" murmured in his ear a sweet, low voice that was very soothing and dear, though he could not for the moment think to whom it belonged. "My darling Lévochka, it was all a mistake! I am your own, loving little Vyéra, your own betrothed, all your own for always. It was not as you feared, not for an instant!"

He smiled. He knew now that this was Faith, her sweet voice, her tender touch. He could not recall what mistake she referred to, but he would not bother to remember. He was too lazily content!

The physician left them to Natália Petrónna's care and passed into the adjoining room, where were two other figures — a desolate, half-palsied old man, lying trembling and weak in his reclining chair, and a younger man, in brilliant uniform, sitting by the table, his glossy brown head bowed in deepest trouble on his crossed arms.

"He is perfectly conscious now," said the doctor cheerily. "He knows her and is happy and satisfied. In about ten minutes more he will be able to talk to you all. It was rather a long swoon, and there were a few moments when I feared we could not pull him through; but he began to revive

just as the priests were administering the Holy Unctions. I suppose Heaven, and not I, will get all the credit!"

"Heaven blessed your efforts and they were no worse for the blessing," said the old prince, adding with a sigh, "It is so hard to be old and helpless at such a juncture."

"There is no regular organic disease of the heart, only a functional disturbance resulting from intense emotion. He will be as well as usual in a week and it may never recur. It was fortunate," continued the physician, turning to Dovsprung, who had lifted his head and was listening intently, "that your Excellency was present to take charge of affairs. Your prompt action did much to insure his recovery and to help that poor, frightened child. She is a good nurse, however, and did wonderfully well."

"I owe much to her," said the old prince. "In the midst of her grief and anxiety about her lover she remembered the poor old man, and ministered to me most tenderly." Then, as the doctor left, he added, "Youri Andrévich, I have not thanked you, for I knew you felt it a privilege to serve them."

"Fortunate! My presence fortunate!" groaned Dovsprung, dropping his head again on his arms. "It was the cause of the whole misfortune."

"You understood her gentle, loyal heart better than any of us," said the prince, more kindly than he had hitherto spoken. "We should have had faith in her constancy, even against the evidence of our senses."

"Why is it," queried Dovsprung, lifting his pale, set face, "that Providence permits it that my evil deeds cause no public scandal or apparent injury, yet when I come to this house in all humility and rectitude of purpose, desirous only of bringing peace and atonement, then I cause nothing but misunderstanding, shock and pain, a whole household grief-stricken, and the world started surmising and gossiping?"

"Do not be distressed about gossiping tongues," said the

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wise old man. "The world will soon forget to talk when they see the couple united and happy, and that there is no breach in our friendship for you."

"I shall not disturb you long," said the younger man. "I have applied for active service — Mandzhúrya or the Pri-Amur, the farther off the better!"

"You will give up your brilliant career at the capital?" asked the prince, eyeing him curiously.

"Brilliant!" echoed Dovsprung, bitterly, while a spasm of aversion contracted his handsome features. "Aye, brilliant I suppose it has been! I have risen rapidly in court and official life. I have gained coveted honors and am held up as a model because I have taken no dishonest advantage of my position. I have served the world well and been served well by it in return. But, my God! at what cost to my soul has this worldly success been obtained? I have even forgotten that I had a soul — or a God," he added.

"Yes, that is the usual price of worldliness and immorality," said the older man, sternly. Then he added more gently, "At least, you have proved that you have a conscience. It has been a perverted one, but not wholly faithless. You have not feared to search your soul in the light that has come to you. You will be a nobler man for it, and though the love you craved will not be yours, it will bring you a blessing."

Dovsprung sighed heavily. "There is little but bitterness in my soul," he said. "The moral shock I have suffered has violently turned my will from evil, but it has not yet drawn me to love the good. It has deprived me of earthly joys, but given me no relish for heavenly ones. It has filled me with self-contempt and emptied me of ambition, of purpose, of aim in life. It will be a bitter struggle to learn to live for an object other than myself." He rose as Natália Petróna opened the door, looking anxiously at her uncle.

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"I am selfish as ever, burdening your saddened heart with my complainings and remorse," apologized Dovsprung, reddening with discomfiture. "Your Highness has shown an almost paternal patience with me and I have abused it. Forgive me, I leave you at once to rest."

"Remember, Youri Andrévich," said the prince, warningly. "It is best that you should, while still in Peterburg, visit us as usual. You will now have a warmer welcome than for many years past."

The young man bowed deeply, then glanced furtively at Natália Petróna. It was evident that she did not sympathize with her uncle's attitude. She was silent, and, bowing again, Dovsprung passed out.

When the countess had seen her uncle comfortably disposed on the sofa and the room darkened, she came out into the ante-room. A figure waiting there stepped forward from the shadow. It was Dovsprung.

She stopped short. She tried hard to conceal the contempt and disgust she felt for the man, but their traces were only too plainly visible on her face. If a Christian must forgive, then she was no Christian!

"Natália Petróna," he began in a low, embarrassed tone, so different from his usual self-complacent readiness of speech. "You have suspected me and distrusted me from the first. I was conscious of it and it irritated me, for I believed myself the soul of honor and chivalry. But you were right! You cannot condemn me more severely than I condemn myself. I leave it to you how I shall act. Your uncle believes it will be a wise precaution against possible gossip if I continue to come here during the short time I remain in the capital. But you and your brother will feel differently. Lyéff Petrónich can have nothing but murder in his heart, and you — an infinite contempt. My presence would be an offence and an insult to you both."

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"Lyóva will bow to the judgment of his uncle," said the countess, coldly. "As for me, I have my own drawing-room and your visits will be elsewhere. I do not deny, Youri Andrévich, that I regard you with contempt, not so much for your conduct in this one instance as for your despicable past, which has been but the prelude to it. I can have no charity for you."

There was an awkward pause. If any woman in the world had a right to speak frankly to him it was she, who had known him from childhood, who was a year older than himself, who, with her brothers, had been the companions of his sister and himself in their youthful studies and pursuits. She had known him in the bright virtue of his early manhood, and she had known him in these later days, depraved by the world and his successes.

"I deserve all that you say," he replied at last. "I cannot claim your charity. I have, indeed, been a sneak and a scoundrel."

She began to understand how the man had disarmed Faith's indignation, and how her uncle could forgive him and receive him again. Her tone was more gentle as she said, "At least, I can be just; I know that you have done your best to make reparation for the harm you would have done in this case. Fortunately, you had a different type of woman to deal with than has hitherto attracted you. But there is a further reparation for you to make, Youri Andrévich, one that you owe to yourself, to your own manhood. You should be reconciled to God and seek His grace. You should go to confession."

"I have already done so," he said, quietly.

She gave a start of surprise, a look of joy flashed into her face, the tears came into her eyes. "You have been to confession?" she exclaimed.

"Surely!" he replied. "God forgive me if I did not go from the highest motives, but I could not have presumed

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to offer myself to that innocent young girl until my guilty soul had been shriven of its most shameful sins."

The tears rolled down Natália Petrónna's cheeks.

"Yúrochka!" she cried, "Yúrochka! Dear brother! Dear old comrade! I did not know this, or you should never have heard a harsh word from my lips!"

"I have been a poor soldier of the Church-Militant," he said, sadly. "I do not wonder at your surprise. I have been a deserter from the ranks, but I have come to see the shame and cowardice of it, and I knew my duty — I have given myself up and been court-martialed. Only," he added in a kind of reverent wonder, "instead of condemning me to be shot, Mother Church pardons and restores!" and there was the sound of a half sob in his voice.

"They do not shoot deserters in the army of heaven," said Natália Petrónna, with deep emotion. "On the contrary, there is joy among the angels — over your penance" — her voice broke.

"It is too soon to rejoice over me," he interrupted. "I am not a religious man and it will be hard to make me one. I have confessed because it was my duty to God, to myself, and to her, but I do not know if God will accept such penance as mine. An innocent girl whom I adore has seen the blackness of my soul and has shrunk from me; my repentance is for her sake more than for the sake of heaven!"

"God will not despise you because the hand of a woman leads you to Him," said Natália Petrónna, earnestly. "He makes use of many instruments."

"Natásha! Is it possible you have such kind words for me? Is it possible you can shed tears for me? Oh, you good women! How I have misunderstood you all. I have thought you cold and unsympathetic because you did not respond to our unworthier natures; but when our better nature speaks, then you are all tears and smiles and sisterly kindness and affection!"

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"See how we Christians love one another," quoted Natália Petrónna, gently, holding out her hand to him. "Come when you will, Yúrochka. Our house shall be a second home to you."

"Natáša!" he murmured, and bowing low over her hand, pressed his lips to it reverently, and withdrew.

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As the doctor had predicted, it was fully a week before Solntsoff recovered his strength sufficiently to go about his accustomed work. For three days they kept him in bed, tenderly nursed by Avdótia Ilínichna and cheered by frequent visits from his sister and Faith.

He was lying propped up on pillows, very pale, with dark circles under his eyes and with colorless lips, when Faith first came timidly into his room, where Avdótia sat discreetly sewing.

She glanced around. What a contrast to his simple bachelor apartment, which would be their future home, was this large, stately chamber, with its rich rugs, beautifully carved and inlaid tables and chairs, the luxurious bed, the costly draperies, the enameled and jeweled Ikons, the choice engravings and exquisitely decorated walls and ceilings. He followed her glance and laughed.

"Eudoxie and my uncle spoil me," he said, in French. "You saw that no such luxury awaits you in my poor quarters."

"Lyéff Petróvich deserves the best we can give him," said Avdótia, decidedly. Like most confidential servants in the households of the old Russian nobility she understood a little French, and was accustomed to being treated with consideration and taking a modest part in the family conversations.

"He certainly does deserve the best," agreed Faith.

"And I have it!" he said, slipping his hand over hers.

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"I have not explained everything to you yet," began Faith, hesitatingly, in a low voice.

"Explained?" he asked. "What need is there for explanation between you and me, Vyéra? I know that you still are mine. That is sufficient. I have suffered enough for my momentary doubt."

"But I want you to understand about Youri Andrévich!"

"I care nothing for what passed between you and him except as it affects your happiness. If his conduct pleases you, I am satisfied and wish him well. If he has offended you in the past but is now restored to your favor, I will not ask to know his offence. He has your forgiveness and esteem, and I, too, must forgive him, and will try to esteem him. You cannot expect me, however, to take him to my heart and love him like a brother!"

"But that is just what I want you to do!" she said, anxiously.

"My dear child, that is not in human nature. Two men cannot love and passionately desire the same woman and yet continue calmly on as friends, especially where one has tried to win away the other's betrothed in defiance of all the laws of honor and friendship and hospitality. Faith, I have the conviction that if I knew all I should wish to murder him! So leave me in my ignorance!"

"If you murdered him," she said, in pretended dismay, "you would be hanged for it, and I should have neither one nor the other of you!"

"Sensible girl! Keep what you have and make the best of it. But it is plain to be seen that you have an extraordinary influence over him. The poor chap adores you, and since he cannot have you I will at least pity him and try to treat him generously. I can afford to do so, you make me so happy."

"I love to hear you say that," cried Faith. "It means so much to me. Goodness knows, I have brought you

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trouble enough. Yet, to have the sweetness of feeling that, in spite of everything, I can make you happy! I do not know how I do it, but it is all the sweeter that there is no conscious effort on my part."

"When you know me better," he sighed, "and begin to suffer from my many faults, I am afraid there will have to be a good many conscious efforts on my part before I can make you happy."

"You are talking foolishly, which is a sign that you are tired. I must leave you to rest," she laughed, drawing away from him.

"Listen, Faith! If you have any more lovers in the background who will be inconvenienced by a temporary rupture of our engagement, please, I beg of you, prepare me beforehand for what you will say and do."

"There are no others," she replied. "Dovsprung is unique!"

"Unique!" he echoed. "It is indeed to be hoped there are not many who follow his methods."

* * * * *

On the fourth day Solntsoff was moved into the library, where he sat, half-lying, half-upright, in the corner of the sofa. He was still pale, but there was a look of deep content in his quiet eyes. Natália and Faith sat near him, and little Alyósha, now quite well, was reading aloud from his book of Kryloff's Fables, when Prince Kliázemski came in from the adjoining room, leaning on Dovsprung's arm.

"I am bringing a friend to bid you good-bye," he said. "Youri Andrévich starts to-morrow for the Pri-Amur."

Natália Petróvna rose hastily, took Alvósha by the hand and led him out of the room.

It was the first time the two young men had met since the eventful scene in the same room four days earlier. They looked at each other steadily a moment, then Solntsoff spoke cheerfully.

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"Come here, Yúrochka! I did not do justice either to you or to my promised wife, and I have given you both a great fright and trouble about me. But I know better now," and he held out his hand.

Dovsprung crossed the room and stood by the sofa. He was white and agitated, his lips and hands trembling uncontrollably. Then he sank on one knee by Solntsoff's side.

"You do not understand all yet," he said, in a low voice, "or you would shoot me down before you offered me your hand."

"Say no more!" interrupted Solntsoff, hastily. "I particularly wish not to understand all. That lies between you and Vyéra Kárlovna. Whom she pardons and trusts, I, too, will pardon and trust. Embrace me, Brother!"

The tears were streaming down Dovsprung's white cheeks, his whole frame shook with heavy sobs. The two men flung their arms around each other, kissing and embracing each other with hearty fervor, as Russians will.

Faith had stolen across to where the old prince sat, and now stood by him watching these two, who seemed completely to have forgotten her presence. She felt very small indeed in the face of such emotions. What a wonderful thing it was to look into a man's soul, to see it in the evil and the good, the struggle of a darkened conscience toward the light, the workings of the grace of God, the anguish of self-contempt, the uplifting power of repentance, the ennobling influence of a pure love! What was she, an ignorant, blundering child, that God should have chosen her to be His instrument in this man's salvation?

And what a still more wonderful thing it was to look into the noble, Christian soul of the other man who so loved her, and who, for her sake, had overcome his natural resentment against his enemy and taken him to his bosom! Oh, she, Faith, was nothing, nothing! These men loved thus, they acted thus, not because she was herself, but because they were themselves, and could not love or act

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otherwise, and because the good God was leading them both in His own wondrous way!

After a few moments' talk in low, earnest tones, Dovsprung arose, and pressing Solntsoff's hand in farewell, crossed the room to where Prince Kliázemski sat, with Faith standing by his side. His bearing was erect, but his eyes looked downward as if he dared not raise them to meet the others' gaze.

"I have come to say farewell for two or three years, perhaps forever, for the post has its dangers," he said. "Vladimir Pávlovich, I ask your blessing on my new life and an occasional remembrance in your prayers, unworthy as I am of being remembered." He knelt down by the old man's side, near the spot where Faith was standing.

The prince laid his hands on the young man's head and blessed him with fervor, then embraced him with paternal kindness. "I shall hope to hear from you from time to time, for as long as my life lasts I shall take a father's interest in you, my son, my dear son! May the spirits of your noble parents dwell with you, to guide and keep you!"

Dovsprung kissed the old man's hands with deepest respect; then, without rising from his knee, he turned toward Faith.

"Fidès," he said, lifting his eyes to hers for the first time, "Angel of pity and forgiveness! Will you, too, bless me?"

Faith was startled. She had never blessed any one in her life, nor had any one, not even Lyóva, ever called her an angel. She had not the faintest idea what to say. She glanced over at Solntsoff, who smiled back at her, tenderly and encouragingly. It was very embarrassing, for they were all looking at her and waiting for her to speak. She laid her hands timidly on Dovsprung's glossy, brown head, and stammered out the only words that came to her — words from Holy Scripture that Solntsoff himself had once said to her, "May God bless and preserve you, and may He give

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His holy angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways!"

Dovsprung remained on his knees, his head sunk on his breast. It seemed as if he could not tear himself away from this adored child, — known and loved too late! He had a longing for something of hers that he might treasure, that he might wear next his heart, to kiss and to cherish — a trinket, a handkerchief, anything that had once been hers, but he dared not ask. What right had he? He would stoop and kiss the hem of her dress — perhaps she would give him her hand for one blessed moment.

Suddenly he felt that she was bending toward him, her fingers lightly touched the Cross of St. George upon his breast, and her sweet voice whispered, "You have overcome once, you will overcome to the end. You will be truly *Saint George*." And then — was he dreaming, or were her lips pressed to his brow?

It was the first kiss of innocence that had come to him since the death of a cherished little sister, in the days of his upright youth. Like the chrism of consecration, the kiss of angelic love and compassion rested an instant on his brow, then it was gone, but its sacred touch had thrilled to the inmost fibers of his moral being.

He rose to his feet and stood a moment, erect and knightly, a glow of exaltation transforming his features, his uplifted eyes shining in the light of high resolve. Then, bowing low before her in deepest reverence, as one bows before the holy Ikons, he turned and went forth from the beloved presence to meet his new life of exile, privation and danger.

And Faith, shaken in soul and overwhelmed by the emotions of the past few days, fled to her lover's side, and, kneeling down by his couch, flung her arms about him and cried as if her heart were breaking.

As for the lover, he held her to his breast, understanding all.

PART III

CHAPTER XXI

THE BISHOP INTERFERES

"If thou dost bid thy friend farewell,
But for one night though that farewell may be,
Press thou his hand in thine — how canst thou tell
How far from thee
Fate or caprice may lead his feet
Ere that to-morrow comes? Men have been known
To lightly turn the corner of a street,
And days have grown
To months, and months to lagging years,
Ere they have looked in loving eyes again!
Parting at best is underlaid with tears,
Therefore lest sudden death should come between,
Or time, or distance, clasp with pressure true
The hand of him who goeth forth. Unseen
Fate goeth, too."

— *Coventry Palmore.*

A FORTNIGHT later a family council was being held at Brussels. Three men were in earnest debate — Bishop Ludlow, striding back and forth the library of Milbanke's quarters in the British Legation, stopping from time to time to gesticulate forcefully as he laid down the law and the Gospel to his hearers; Rupert Milbanke, standing alternately at the window or the fireplace, with hands in his pockets and a frown of vexation on his brow, while by the table sat a gentleman who had hitherto not taken a large part in his family's councils — Mr. Charles Brandon.

Faith's father bore a strong resemblance to his daughter Sophy. Like her, he was not handsome, but looked intellectual and amiable. Like her, also, he was kind-hearted and well-meaning, but too much absorbed in his own studies

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and pursuits and too easily led by those about him, especially by his elder daughter and his brother-in-law. Yet he, also, had his moments of insubordination and self-assertion, and the present moment was apparently of these.

"Solntsoff's conduct places me in an awkward predicament," said Rupert, with a deepening of the vexed frown. "My next move would naturally be to St. Petersburg, but it will be decidedly unpleasant for me there as the brother-in-law of Solntsoff, the publicist, if he is going to set every one by the ears in this fashion. He has resigned from the Foreign Office and his diplomatic career, and now, a week later, brings out his review, the first two numbers of which contain the most virulent attacks on the Ministry for their policy in Manchuria. He has pulled down a perfect hornet's nest. The Russian Foreign Office is deeply annoyed, especially when its relations with Japan are so ticklish. Solntsoff is all right as a private man. He is a clean, steady, clever fellow of much personal charm, but as a pugnacious publicist brother-in-law he is going to be a nuisance."

"His whole conduct has been a bitter disappointment," broke in the bishop. "He has shown a duplicity and cunning with regard to Faith's religion that has been an awful shock to me. She is by nature a truthful child, yet you see how he has led her to deceive me, leaving me to think that she could be received into full communion with the Orthodox and yet remain an Anglican. Then it comes out that she had to be confirmed over again and solemnly abjure her 'heresies!'" The bishop nearly choked over the word. "He has her completely hypnotized. She absolutely said to my face that she wanted to go over to the Russian Church because no one acknowledged my Orders, while even Rome acknowledged Orthodox Orders! Why, she might as well go over to Rome itself on that excuse!" and he laughed sardonically at such a *reductio ad absurdum*.

"Well, and why not?" put in Mr. Brandon. "I am a

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Unitarian, you know, and I look at it all from the viewpoint of an outsider, but I never thought your High Church position logical. The claim of Rome is as well founded in Scripture as the claim that there is any organized church at all. The two stand or fall together. What I can't comprehend is your keeping on in a Protestant denomination, and rigging yourself out with Catholic trappings which every one can see do not belong to you!"

The bishop was paralyzed! A Protestant denomination! Yet what could he say? That wretched appellation which in an evil hour had been tacked on to the American Episcopal Church hung about its shoulders like a veritable Old-Man-of-the-Sea. And even in England, did not the king, as head of the English Church, have at his coronation to declare himself, on oath a Protestant and the upholder of Protestant religion? It was a terrible thing that the Non-conformists should have this handle for their assertions!

Rupert glanced rather pityingly at his stepfather. It was strange how completely devoid of any church instinct these men were who grew up in believe-as-you-please Agnosticism and Unitarianism. They were so narrow, so lacking in a fair understanding of the Early British Church and its Historic Continuity, let alone the theological significance of it all!

Still, on the other hand, he could not wholly agree with the view of his uncle. Bishop Ludlow was equally narrow in his way. Since it was a legal necessity that Faith, in marrying an Orthodox Russian, should be married by an Orthodox clergyman, why should the bishop demand to perform the ceremony himself alone, and seize upon this innocent occasion to try and wring from the Russian Synod a recognition of the validity of his Orders? Why not, rather, by magnanimously acquiescing in their requirements, show them how completely he felt himself at one with them in their sacramental and ecclesiastical life?

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He started to suggest this latter course in mild and diplomatic language, but Mr. Brandon interrupted.

"Do you mean to say, Wilfred," he asked the bishop, "when you accuse Solntsoff of duplicity, that he had actually told you, in so many words, that Faith could receive the Russian sacraments and yet remain an Anglican?"

"I had every reason to understand that she could do so," replied Bishop Ludlow, firmly. "He says that I failed to make that stipulation clear in my letter, but I find all these Slavs tricky, the higher clergy the same as the laity. They are full of outward tolerance and courtesy, they listen with sympathy, they treat you with every mark of consideration and respect. But when it comes to some practical test question, they smile and bow, and calmly lock the door in your face! Then you find out that was what they had meant to do from the first. I declare I would rather deal with the irreconcilable arrogance of Rome itself! At least you know where you stand."

"Which is, on the sands!" laughed Mr. Brandon. "They won't let you on to the Rock of the Church, either in the East or in the West. But, after all, that is a side issue. Let us go to the practical point."

The bishop's lip curled scornfully. The practical point indeed! That was the very thing he was fighting for! And who was Charles Brandon, of all impossible theorists and dreamers, to talk of practical things?

"How do you propose to get round the difficulty?" asked the impossible theorist.

"I shall simply break up the marriage," said the bishop, with Spartan firmness.

Rupert started forward with a subdued exclamation. It was his little sister's happiness they were planning to break up so ruthlessly! "But, Sir ——" he began.

"I am Faith's spiritual guardian by her mother's will," declared the bishop with solemn emphasis. "Her religious

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education was entrusted to me, I baptized her and confirmed her, and it is my duty to draw her back from error and perversion. And it is your duty, Charles, to bear me out in this," and he fixed a commanding eye on his brother-in-law.

But the usually subservient Mr. Brandon was emboldened by pity for his child to unexampled resistance. "The fact is, Wilfred," he said recklessly, "I consider Faith's spiritual vagaries to be largely the fault of your bringing up. When my wife made her will, before we went down to Argentina, you were not so carried away with High Church notions as you are now. She supposed that the child would be brought up a sound Protestant, in the good, old-fashioned, Low-Church Protestant-Episcopalianism of your sisters and your parents, and of your own youth. But for the last four or five years you have been filling the girl's head with a craze for early ecclesiastical history and with projects for reunion with the Russian and Greek and Oriental Orthodox churches, till she thought it the natural and obvious thing to join in with them and was not surprised when she understood you to encourage her to do so. You have only yourself to blame for her condition of mind."

"I deny that!" said the bishop stoutly. "It is Rupert, here, who is responsible, with his notion that we are all national branches of one church, that we should in Russia worship with the Russians, in Rome with the Romanists, in Greece with the Greeks, indifferently. — He does not seem to see that it is their stiff-necked refusal to acknowledge our Anglican orders and sacraments which keeps us all apart, to the scandal of Christendom."

"I plead guilty," said Rupert, carelessly. "I confess I cannot see an iota of difference between their Orthodox doctrines and those of the Early British Church, or of what your lordship is pleased to call the 'Ritualists' of to-day, or even of the Roman Church, barring the Papacy. My preference would be for Faith to marry an Englishman and remain an

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Anglican. But as she is in love with a wholly admirable fellow who happens to be a Russian, I do not feel the slightest concern at her worshiping with him according to the requirements of his branch of the Church!"

The bishop snorted contemptuously and was about to burst out in reply, when Mr. Brandon interposed.

"Between you both," he said, "I see that the only thing to do is to get Faith back to the care of her good Protestant aunts. She is very young to know her own mind, either in religion or in love. I propose that she return with me to America, be introduced to American society, and have a chance to meet some representative American young men. She can go to college if she wants to, or take up any of the interests of young girls of her age, and learn to know what she is giving up. There will be no Russian Church to charm her in Boston, and she will soon forget and come back to look at things in the old way."

"You have omitted two imperative conditions," interrupted the bishop. "The engagement must be broken off definitively and there must be no correspondence with this man or any of his family or friends."

"Will it be necessary to go quite so far?" hesitated Mr. Brandon.

"Undoubtedly! Merely deferring the marriage would not answer at all. She must understand that it is off forever."

"I don't believe she will break it off," said Rupert. "She may submit to a test, for she is very gentle and reasonable, but that is as far as she will go."

"She must break it!" pronounced the uncle. "She must be made to feel she cannot help herself. She cannot legally marry in Europe without her father's consent, and he has only to show a little firmness, and consideration for his wife's wishes."

There was a pause. "How long is the test to last?" inquired Milbanke.

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"Oh, ah, why, a year or so, I suppose," said Mr. Brandon, undecidedly.

"It should last till she is twenty-one. Even at twenty-one a girl is a mere baby!" declared the bishop, whose own wife had been twenty-nine at her marriage.

"I agree that you were both rather foolish to let her think of marrying at eighteen," said Mr. Brandon. "It is far too young."

"Her mother was only eighteen and a half when she married my father — a singularly happy marriage in every respect," put in Rupert, eyeing his step-father rather grimly. Mr. Brandon had a way of ignoring his wife's first marriage that irritated Rupert and it gave him a malicious pleasure to refer to it on every occasion. "In a year Faith will be her mother's age. She is a strong, healthy, well-developed girl physically, and she is mentally more mature than most girls can ever hope to be at any age. To drag out the test three years and a half seems to me to be tantamount to persecution."

"It is no mere test," replied the bishop. "It is a case where she must be rescued at every cost from an unfortunate step."

"That is exactly what Genevieve thinks," drawled Mr. Brandon, in a tone so like his daughter that even the bishop started and flushed a little. "She never could understand why you encouraged the match from any point of view. She always thought you were grossly deceived in Solntsoff."

The bishop grew purple. Milbanke grinned. "Yes, it will be nuts to Miss Brandon," he remarked. But the bishop could think of nothing to say, though he walked the room with tremendous energy and cleared his throat vigorously at short intervals.

"Well, what shall I do?" asked Mr. Brandon, rather helplessly. "Must I tell Faithie that it is all over, or — or what?"

Now the bishop, when he thought of Genevieve Brandon,

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and recalled how she had blackened the whole Ludlow clan, had been almost ready to telegraph Solntsoff to come on and have the ceremony performed, then and there, by the Pope of Rome even, if he wished it. But the sight of Mr. Brandon's weakness and irresolution and Milbanke's levity recalled him to his responsibilities.

"Certainly it is all over," he said. "What she may do after she is twenty-one, neither I nor you are answerable for. But let it be distinctly understood by all concerned that the engagement is broken wholly on religious grounds. In every other way the match is a most desirable one, most desirable! I cannot concur at all in Miss Brandon's estimate of the affair. Her objections were wholly without foundation! Solntsoff is a man of irreproachable character, disinterested motives, distinguished position and attainments. If I complain of any lack of openness in his dealings with me, it is solely in the matter of religion, and for that I blame his church and not himself."

"Well, there is plenty of time to decide the particulars," said Mr. Brandon, easily. "This is only February and I do not sail for home till May."

"I sail a week from to-day, on account of my mother's poor health," said the bishop. "Faith should return with me to see her grandmother. What is to be done should be done at once."

Rupert winced and turned his head aside. Mr. Brandon also winced and gave a little sigh. "The poor baby!" he said, softly.

"I, as her spiritual guardian, am the proper one to tell her and explain the insuperable obstacles which intervene," declared the bishop.

"No, no!" cried Rupert, starting forward. "She is in my house as my guest. I invited her to stop with me till she married. If she is to be sent away I am the one to let her know."

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"Yes, Wilfred," interposed Mr. Brandon. "You know you said yourself that it was all Rupert's fault. He ought to be the one to suffer for it. Let him break it to her."

Rupert did not wait for the bishop's consent; but pushed hastily by him and out of the door, which closed rather noisily behind him.

Faith, quite unconscious of the gathering storm, was in the school room, waiting for the little boys to come in from their walk and have their usual hour of story-telling before the fire. She was reading for the twentieth time the letter that had come to her that morning from St. Petersburg.

"I am now fully launched into the tempestuous sea of political journalism (it said) and, heavens, how the elements rage! No doubt our lively little sheet is itself responsible for some of the breeze. It is not so much a newspaper as a daily review of current events, and our leaders are unsparing. Your tender little heart would be torn to shreds if you could see how your Big Friend is attacked by his morning contemporaries. My admirers might be more numerous and my adversaries less abusive, if I myself were less aggressive, but be at peace, Little Comrade, and have no anxiety for me. What I am doing, or trying to do, I estimate in the light of eternity, and care little about unpopularity or opposition. I should enjoy the fight if it were not, unfortunately, my poor country that is concerned. Not that I think my ideas are the only ones that will save Russia. Poor Russia! She has so many would-be saviours! But I do take sadly to heart the present attitude of the government toward affairs in the Far East. We are acting as if it all depended on our own august will whether there was to be war or not. I do not think Japan will hesitate long. If they are ever to fight us, they must do so before the trans-Siberian railway is completed. Now is their time, and I have little doubt they will act. It took the English two years to subdue a handful of Dutch farmers in South Africa, although the question of transportation of troops was a comparatively easy one for them. We seem to have learned nothing from their discomfiture. Yet what would a Manchurian war mean to us, who must trans-

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port, in the dead of winter, not only every soldier, but his equipment and maintenance, and all the supplies of every branch of the service over six thousand miles of a single-track, lightly built and uncompleted railway? Moreover our treaty with France obliges us to keep two thirds of our best fighting forces on the enormous stretch of European frontier, not to speak of the garrisons on thousands of miles of Asiatic frontier. How can we adequately meet, at the extreme end of a remote province of China, a clever, well-prepared foe who is near his base of supplies and can strike quickly? All will depend on what defense our Pacific fleet can put up, and part of that fleet is now lying ice-bound at Vladivostock! Of course, we shall triumph in the end; it is merely a matter of time, and they will never reach Russian territory; but, oh, the folly of it all! And I regret to say there is a political party here, so unpatriotic, so unworthy the name of Russian, that it actually courts war and prays for disaster for the sake of discrediting those in power!

"Some persons might not think this a love letter; but you, my golden one, know better! It means much to you to share all my thoughts, my fears, my hopes and endeavors. Perhaps I see everything through dark glasses because you are no longer by my side.

"I was very sorry that your uncle should have met with what doubtless seemed to him discourtesy. He is a zealous and a noble-hearted man, absorbed in what is truly a great purpose, though, alas, not on the right road to achieve it. But I trust that you will win him to look at the question with your own eyes of faith, or, at least, with the tolerance of your brother."

The aforesaid brother, peeping in at the door, felt a sharp constriction about the heart. It always reminded him so of his lost Amy to see Faith sitting in the low chair by the fire, waiting for the children's hour. His whole sympathy went out to that poor fellow in Russia, who was to be robbed of his hopes of wife and children and home. His spirit was full of rebellion; but there was no time to lose, or the bishop would swoop down on them and make it harder for Faith than ever.

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He gave a cheery whistle and she sprang up and embraced him and led him to the fire; and they stood together looking down at its fantastic pictures.

"It will break me all up to have you leave, Faithie," he said.

"Ah, don't think of it! We have eight more months together. By that time you may be glad to get rid of me."

"But your father has a notion, dear, that you, er — ought to go back to America, to — er — see your grandmother again — she is ill, you know."

"I, too, had thought of that," said Faith, hesitatingly. "It seems hard not to see her and my aunts once more before settling over here forever, when they really brought me up. But I do not feel that I can leave now — not altogether on your account, dear Rupert, though I know you will miss me, but because I do not wish to put the ocean between Lyéff Petróvich and myself when he is so anxious and disturbed about his country's affairs. I ought to be right at hand to comfort him a bit in his troubles."

Rupert's heart sank lower and lower. Nothing but the thought of the bishop gave him strength to wound her gentle, faithful spirit and tell her truthfully the result of their family councils. When he finished doing so he was fairly trembling and tearful as a girl, but she, on the contrary, showed nothing but wide-eyed amazement.

"But, Rupert, it simply cannot be," she declared. "A promise of marriage should only be broken for serious reasons. Uncle says he did not realize what was required when he urged my joining the Orthodox Church, but that does not alter one thing in my position toward Lyóva. We were betrothed with the full consent of both my guardians, he has my 'promise true,' and nothing has happened to warrant breaking it off. Why, just think, Rupert, dear! All a good man's hopes of a happy home, of a loving wife and — and — of dear little children, are built upon my promise. It is no

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light thing to disappoint such hopes as those. If — if we were parted by death, he would have to bear it and God would give him grace, but to be parted because of my uncle's misunderstanding with the Russian hierarchy is too unreasonable to be thought of. It simply cannot be!"

"But unfortunately, you are under age, and your father has yielded to your uncle's demand."

Faith laughed. "I mean no disrespect to dear Papa," she said, "but if Uncle will only let him alone, Papa will listen to reason and never ask such a thing of me. Why, only ten days ago, when he arrived here, he was completely under Genevieve's influence and full of prejudices, but it did not take us twenty-four hours to convert him. And Uncle really has no legal control over my freedom of action, has he?"

"I think not. The clause in the will was merely a recommendation to your father to let the bishop direct your religious training. Our mother herself was very catholic-minded, and I have no doubt would have consented as freely as I did to your worshiping with your husband. Nor did it bother our good uncle as long as he thought the Russian Church would recognize his Orders. But he has worked successfully on your father's scruples and revived his prejudices in favor of your marrying an American."

"But all Americans are not Episcopalians!" remarked Faith, with discrimination. "Even if some misguided American youth may happen to want to marry me, I might, after all, in the bishop's eyes, only jump from the frying-pan into the fire."

"You couldn't," said Rupert, dryly. "The bishop recognizes no frying-pan but Oriental schismatics, no fire but Rome! In good Boston society you meet only Unitarians, as I understand, and they are not fire, but ice! It would be sad, of course, to marry a Unitarian, but there would be compensations."

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Again Faith laughed quite merrily. It was such an absurdity to ask her to break with Lyóva that she really had no fears.

"Listen, Rupert," she said. "It will be very hard for me, but I will suggest a sort of compromise. I will return to America with Uncle and make a visit to my aunts. I will go into society and see all of the world they want me to for six months. I shall have no Russian friends, no Russian Church while there; and I will read all the controversial books that Uncle gives me. Lyéff Petróvich and I will write each other only once a week, or even only once in two weeks, instead of every other day, as we do now. But in October, as agreed, I shall come back to you and see Lyóva again. Then, if he doesn't come up to my revised and Americanized standards, or I have developed doubts about his faith, it will be time enough to think of breaking with him."

"I will suggest this compromise to the powers that be," sighed Rupert, "but it does not remove the objection to your youth."

"That cannot be helped, it runs in the family," said Faith. "My mother married at eighteen and a half, and Father's grandmother married at sixteen and was engaged at fourteen. It is a direct inheritance!"

But while these two planned their compromise, the bishop was striking while the iron was hot. He had brought Mr. Brandon to a scrupulous and submissive mood, in which he believed he was carrying out his wife's intentions with regard to Faith. The bishop was not going to let the man slip from his influence till the work was accomplished. Mr. Brandon was made to sit down and, then and there, write a letter to Prince Solntsoff telling him that as Faith would not be free to marry without the consent of her guardians till she was twenty-one years of age, he might as well consider the engagement broken off unconditionally, as neither her father nor her uncle could possibly give their assent to her

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worshiping in the Russian Church, and both considered her too young for marriage.

The bishop sealed and posted the letter with his own hands for fear Mr. Brandon might have compunctions and add a postscript. Forty-eight hours later it was received and read by a man already harassed and broken in spirit and sore at heart over the news that, before even war had been declared, his country's fleet, its sole defense in the Pacific, had been attacked and dispersed; that two of its ships, one containing a lifelong friend, had gallantly sailed out to fight against overwhelming odds and gone down to death and destruction rather than surrender, and that a year of great strain and probably successive disasters awaited Russia before she could gather and equip in that distant province an army adequate to fight a battle that would be not for Russia alone, but for the whole white race and the ideals of Christendom.

All through the night the man fought his bitter struggle, crushing down the ardent hopes of his manhood, stifling his longings, calming his rebellions and throwing himself headlong into the exacting work of his editorial office. By the next evening all St. Petersburg knew that Prince Solntsoff's paper had been seized and suppressed by the censorship, the princely editor fined three hundred rubles, and sentenced to one month's detention in the Fortress of Saints Peter and Paul.

CHAPTER XXII

PRISONERS

“Nightingale, my nightingale,
Sweetly singing nightingale!
Fly the distant countries through
Town and village, hill and dale, —
Will another maiden hear thee
Like to me, poor me? all night
Sleepless, restless, comfortless.” —
— *Russian folk-song, “Solovey, moi solovey,
Golosisiti solovey!”*

WITH many tears and a heavy heart Faith wrote her letter to Lyéff Petróvich, telling him of the terms she had suggested to her father as a compromise. She felt like a traitor to think of putting the ocean between herself and Lyóva at such a moment, when he so greatly needed her sympathy. Yet, after all, she owed a certain duty to her father and her aunts, and should show herself willing to submit to any test that was within reason. Beyond what she had offered she would not go, for beyond that was unreason. If they asked more of her, then she would run away and earn her own living until her father took pity on her and gave his consent. It was not just to make her suffer for her uncle's misapprehensions and inconsistencies.

The bishop left for Antwerp, where Faith was to join him at the end of the week. In his absence Mr. Brandon visibly weakened. Faith's compromise seemed to cover the ground and he expressed an apparent willingness to consent to it. Yes, it would decidedly savor of persecution to ask her to wait three or four years! At any rate, let her think that the separation was but for seven months, and when

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they once had her in America all sorts of things might happen to lengthen the time. Here was this war, for instance. Of course she could not expect that he would let her go to Russia to live in the midst of war. Although the scene of conflict was six thousand miles away, still, who knew but that a general European conflagration might ensue? Faith would see for herself that America was the only fit country to live in. Yes, it was much better to appear to accept the girl's own terms, and then let the future take care of itself.

The days went by and brought no answer to Faith's letter. In the excitement of war news, such a minor incident as the censoring of a journal and the imprisonment of its editor was quite overlooked by the Associated Press, and there was no notice of Solntsoff's misfortune in the European newspapers so eagerly and sorrowfully scanned. Faith remembered her former experience and would never doubt Lyéff Petróvich again, but it was very hard to have to sail without a word from him to say that he understood and acquiesced in her decision. She wrote a second letter, this time addressed to his uncle's care.

Mr. Brandon, meanwhile, found himself in a dilemma. Neither Rupert nor Faith knew of the letter he and the bishop had concocted to Solntsoff, but in due time an answer had arrived, written a few hours before the prince's arrest. In it the writer politely refused to consider the engagement as broken or to cease corresponding with Faith; but, as her welfare was the dearest interest he had on earth, and no sacrifice could be too great that was for her benefit, he would, since they thought her too young at present, cheerfully consent to postpone the marriage a year from the appointed time, that is, until her nineteenth birthday. Mr. Brandon decided not to inform Faith or Rupert of the receipt of this letter.

After a sorrowful leave-taking of her brother and his

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boys, Faith started with her father to join the bishop at Antwerp. There her courage gave out. She burst into tears and informed her father and uncle that wild horses should not drag her aboard that ship until she had a message from Lyéff Petróvich.

What the two gentlemen would have done with their rebellious charge can only be conjectured had not a despatch from Rupert been received in the nick of time, saying that letters had come which he would forward to America, and that he had a line from Countess Chernyatina which said that all were in good health.

This was tolerable comfort. Faith's mind was relieved, Mr. Brandon's troublesome conscience was easier about the suppressed letter, and the bishop inwardly gave thanks. There was no knowing what those letters might contain, but, once across the ocean, and with himself in full charge, he felt that they could not do much harm. When he thought of the scenes they might have had with Faith, the vacillations and the lack of stamina of Charles Brandon, it really seemed as if Providence had directly guided all for the best in arranging that the letters should first reach them on the other side.

But after his little daughter's departure the vacillations of Charles Brandon became less marked. There was something very ingratiating about Faith, and when she was constantly about him her father's heart was very tender toward her. He had not seen her for two years, he had been absent from her during nine years of her childhood, and even the two years she had lived under his roof in the Bay State Road he had hardly been aware of her presence. It had been a complete surprise to him, therefore, when visiting Rupert after a scientific congress at Brussels, to find his little girl so tall, so well-developed, so sweet-mannered, and altogether so good and charming a young woman. Her face was not so much beautiful as it was lovely in character

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and expression, she bore herself modestly but with a dainty little air of breeding and distinction, her smile was like a sunbeam, her eyes were glorious in their depth and soulfulness, her voice was like music, she was as intelligent and companionable as she was gentle and fine. Was it astonishing that she should already be beloved?

But the more Mr. Brandon thought of it the more intolerable it seemed to him that this precious pearl should be buried in a far-off, semi-barbarous country like Russia. At first he had been rather pleased to think of his little daughter as "Princess Solntsova," with a husband who seemed to be of irreproachable character and high in Imperial favor. It was very pretty and like a fairy story to marry a prince and live at court and be happy forever after. But they seemed to have queer sorts of princes in Russia. Apparently they had quite common, American ideas about working and having careers, and making names for themselves. They not only went into the army and diplomacy like other young nobles, but into law and engineering and journalism and many other plebeian pursuits. And this man was poor and had no estates. His entire patrimony did not bring him over twenty-five hundred dollars a year, he had foolishly given up his salary at the Foreign Office and his position at court, and it was problematical how much he could earn with his pen. There would be nothing very princely or fairy-like about living in a simple, four-room flat, in an unfashionable quarter! Mr. Brandon thought his nice little girl deserved something better than that.

Then came the shock of hearing from Rupert that Faith's future husband was in prison. Good heavens! If the match had seemed objectionable before, it was revolting now. The stigma of imprisonment seemed horrible to him. Rupert made light of it, explained that there was no stain attaching to mere political incarceration, that Prince Solntsoff's only offense had been that of expressing his opinions

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too freely, at a ticklish moment, about the policy of a cabinet minister, in a country which had a strict censorship of the press. His arrest was the panic of a sudden crisis that had sought a victim. For Solntsoff was no political revolutionary. He was a conservative, loyal to throne and church, a firm believer in autocracy, though opposed to over-centralization and to certain developments of bureaucracy and attacking fiercely the present Ministry's conduct of affairs in the Far East.

But if the Russian censor was panic-stricken, Mr. Brandon was equally so. Faith's pleading eyes, her tender smile and ingratiating ways were now far removed, and their impression was fast fading. The father grew daily more stern and Brutus-like. It was less hard to hurt Faith for her own good now that he did not have to see the child suffer. He sat down and wrote his convict, would-be son-in-law a letter that even the bishop would have acknowledged to be a model of firmness. The engagement was to be considered broken, unconditionally and forever. Faith should be allowed to receive no letters or communications whatever from the prince or any of his family. She had already sailed for America and should remain there till she was twenty-one and as long after as he could control her actions, but Mr. Brandon added that he hoped, before she was twenty-one, Faith would have learned to love some fine young American fellow and settle down in the land of civilization and freedom.

After this letter was sent Mr. Brandon became hotly engaged in a controversy with a learned Belgian confrère over the exact weight of the gases in the tail of a newly discovered comet. Absorbed in the study and writing necessary for maintaining his opinion, he put aside his paternal cares with the comfortable feeling that he had acted for his child's best good, and had done his duty as the bishop and Genevieve saw it for him. Quite forgetting to inform

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Faith and Rupert of his latest measures, he put the whole matter out of his mind with a sigh of relief.

In the fortress of Saints Peter and Paul the days passed wearily for Solntsoff, not that his imprisonment was severe, — it was merely irksome, — but the absence of occupation left him restless and gave him too much time to brood over the mischances of love and life. He was not permitted to receive any communications from outside, or to send any letters himself, and the only person allowed to visit him was his sister, whose two short visits a week were all that kept him in touch with his family and the world. He had given Natália Petróvna authority to open his private mail. It was painful to him to think of any one else seeing Faith's words to himself, but at this critical moment in their affairs it was absolutely essential that he should know the contents of her letters and those of her guardians, and send such messages as were necessary.

His plain, bare-walled cell was meagrely but decently furnished. He was permitted to walk in the broad corridors of the fortress and to attend the beautiful services in the noble cathedral.* Twice a day he could walk in the garden and converse with his fellow-prisoners, but his sister was his only visitor.

At her second visit she found him in the corridor, looking through the window at the superb view over the islands of the Nyevá toward the Gulf of Finland. The brother and sister embraced and sat down in the window-seat together.

"Uncle is bearing up well, and there has been a third letter from Vyérotchka," she told him. "The dear child writes you so exquisitely. I feel as if I were committing sacrilege in reading her letters to you, yet there is always a sweet restraint, a delicacy of expression that shows the

* The citadel of Saints Peter and Paul contains the prison of state, the mint, the arsenal, and the cathedral, where are the tombs of the Imperial family.

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reticence of maidenhood and makes them such that all the world might read."

"And the sailing has not been deferred?"

"No. She had not received my letters, the time was evidently too short to forward them to her in Antwerp, but Mr. Milbanke had wired her of their receipt, that he would readdress them to America and that we all were well. She seemed content to know they had arrived and apparently supposed them from you and had no suspicion of your imprisonment."

"Of course not, or she would not have sailed. If I could only have seen you one day earlier to tell you how matters stood!" He bit his lip and turned his face aside.

"I am afraid I did not manage it cleverly," said the sister, regretfully, "but I had to act on my own responsibility. I could not consult you, and I did not understand how much Mr. Milbanke was in sympathy with you. I feared the opposition came as much from him as the other relatives, so I wrote directly to her and to her only."

"Did you tell her about poor Youri Andrévich?"

"No. I thought I would wait till we knew more definitely. His name is still among the missing, but Father Gavriil does not think the fact of his death sufficiently established to say the memorial of the dead* for him. We know now the names of the survivors picked up by the boats of the neutral warships and he is not among them, but they think that a few may have been rescued by Japanese boats. They do not give up hope entirely."

"He was a famous swimmer and a bold fighter. He would never have let himself be captured alive. He either went down with the ship, or else was too severely wounded to resist," declared Solntsoff.

They both sighed and, crossing themselves, said a prayer

* *Panahidy*, i.e., the Requiem Mass of the Russian liturgy.

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for Youri Andrévich, for his safety and well-being if alive, or, if dead, for the repose of his shriven soul.

"Why need he have gone out with the ill-fated ships?" queried Natália Petróvna, sadly. "If he had been in the navy, I could understand, but as an army man he should have saved himself to fight with his branch of the service."

"He was not attached to any command," explained the brother. "He was not on any special mission. He had merely obtained leave to go out there as to a post of danger and volunteer his services in case of trouble. He is an utterly fearless man, imbued with the spirit of the old-time Russian warfare. You remember, Natásha, in our early history, when at the siege of Ryazan, in 1240, a handful of Russian bogatyr's attacked the entire Mongolian horde and were slain almost to a man, that the Mongolian Khan wept over the bodies of his enemies and said, 'Russians know well how to drink the deathcup with their princes!' In this spirit I can understand perfectly Yúrochka's impulse to throw in his lot with those who were so gallantly courting death."

"Vyéra will be much affected. I think, after all, that I had better write to her so that poor Youri may have the benefit of her innocent prayers."

"Try, Natásha, to find out from Milbanke a little more clearly how matters stand. You say Vyéra writes that she has consented to please her father by submitting to a test of seven months, and that he was willing to compromise on this. Of me, however, he demanded a complete rupture of the engagement. I have bound myself in honor to an additional year of waiting, but naturally refused anything further at present. His reply to me is an insistence that I must consider the marriage broken off unconditionally and forever. Yet Milbanke's letter to you shows that he himself is under the same impresson as Vyéra, that she is to return in October. Is the father deceiving them or me?"

And Natália Petróvna fulfilled her imprisoned brother's

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wishes with sisterly devotion and promptness. Milbanke also proved to be somewhat in the dark with regard to Mr. Brandon's proceedings, and could give them little enlightenment. They must wait to hear further from Vyéra herself after she should be settled in America.

As long as Solntsoff's imprisonment continued Rupert corresponded regularly with the countess and passed her letters on to Faith. And Faith needed them, for her trials came thick and fast. The rough, wintry voyage had been uneventful, and she had been free from misgivings, for was not Lyóva in good health, and were there not letters following her across the water? She saw little of her uncle, for the bishop, a poor sailor, rarely emerged from the seclusion of his stateroom, preserving his dignity as best he might under the circumstances and graciously refusing Faith's offers of service or companionship.

The first intimation of trouble came on landing. She had wished to cable her safe arrival at once to Solntsoff, when the bishop interfered.

"I shall cable to Rupert," he said. "Let that suffice. It is not proper you should send messages to your former lover."

"My former' lover?" asked Faith, coloring in astonishment.

The bishop looked very grave. "I spoke advisedly," he said. "He is no longer your lover. The engagement is at an end. There would be gross impropriety in your communicating with him."

"Oh, but, dear Uncle, it is not really at an end! Papa settled all that with Rupert and me. It is simply a sort of test. We are not to write as frequently as usual, but that is all. It is not off."

"I apprehend differently," declared the bishop. "Your father said nothing to me of any test. Until I hear from him definitely to the contrary, I must act according to our

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understanding at parting, and absolutely forbid all communication."

Faith trembled with rebellion and dismay. She must submit about the cablegram, that was of minor importance, but the rest was preposterous. She would write at once to her father and ask him to put down their agreement in black on white, and clear up her uncle's extraordinary misapprehension forever.

But in the meanwhile the letters that arrived, forwarded by Rupert, proved to be, not from Solntsoff but from his sister, telling Faith of his imprisonment and the impossibility of his receiving or sending letters till he should be again free.

The tender heart of his Little Comrade was full to bursting; and there was no one to whom she could turn for sympathy or consolation. For her father had expressly forbidden her to speak to any one of Lyéff Petróvich, least of all to her aunts, fearing that with their European tastes and associations they might be a source of encouragement to her foolish fancies. The return of their young charge was a comfort and a delight to these kind, lonely ladies, especially when, a few weeks after her arrival, their aged and feeble mother was released by death from her long widowhood of disappointment and sorrow. The two daughters were greatly prostrated; and Faith was glad of the sacrifice she had made in returning, since she was now able to repay them for the many years of gentle care and training of her childhood, cheering them with her bright, young companionship, and relieving them of the duties of housekeeping.

The bishop had borne the loss of his mother with fortitude and, so far as his filial emotions went, with resignation; but, on the other hand, he could not avoid feeling that the good lady's departure was somewhat ill-timed. It was most unfortunate, most vexatious, if one might be allowed to say so of any such direct dispensation of Providence, that

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the family should be thrown into mourning just at this moment when it was most important to divert Faith's mind, to give her a taste of gay, social life and an opportunity to meet some agreeable American young men. He wondered how long one had to wear mourning for a grandmother. It was very bad for a young girl to be shut off from all the pleasures of youth in this way. She would mope and grow morbid and confirmed in all her vagaries.

His daughters brought him some comfort. "You cannot bring out a girl in the middle of the season," they told him, "unless you are very rich and can spring a sensation. What she must do now is to look up her old school friends. She went to school two years with a very nice set of girls and belonged to their 'sewing circle.' She can go to that, even in mourning, and then perhaps be invited to week-ends at Beverly and Lenox during the summer. Next winter, when she is in half-mourning, she can join the dancing-class of her set and the Vincent Club; and if she makes herself popular with the girls they will be nice to her and invite her even if she hasn't money, for family and brains still count in Boston. Brandon, who has another year at Harvard, can bring a lot of nice fellows to call and take her to football games, and she will manage to have quite a jolly time in spite of poor Grandma!"

The program could not be carried out quite as these thoughtful young ladies planned it. The bishop and his family, living in another city, could do nothing for Faith; and though she went dutifully to the sewing circle and the French club, and found the girls friendly and pleasant and ready to renew old acquaintance, yet she could not make up her mind to accept invitations that would take her away from home while her aunts were so sad. Miss Louisa was still active and soon resumed her classes in Romance literature, but Miss Adèle, formerly more brilliant and attractive than her sister, had aged very much of late and seemed almost too

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feeble to take her part in the work they had formerly shared. More and more her tasks fell upon Faith's young shoulders.

Brandon Ludlow had welcomed his cousin's return with enthusiasm, and with some pride brought several of his college friends to call upon the pretty and charming mannered girl; but, when vacation came, he confided to his sisters that it "wouldn't work."

"The fellows won't stand for it," he said. "Aunt Adèle and Aunt Louisa, with their old-world notions, their courtly airs and their deep mourning, sit in the parlor in their high-back chairs all the time we are there, and expect to take part in the conversation. Now that puts a blight on everything! The fellows feel chills coming over them, and of course Faith can't ask the poor old ladies to stay up in their rooms while she entertains the men downstairs. If we could only go off in another room and sing college songs, or something to thaw out the atmosphere; but the house is too small, and Faithie is too considerate of the old folks' feelings. The fellows would take to her immensely if they had half a chance, but I can't blame them if they don't seem very keen about calling on two elderly maiden ladies, swathed in crape and conversing like 'Elegant Extracts.'"

Faith did her best to be polite to her cousin's friends and to be sympathetic about their sports and college interests, but she found it difficult. They seemed so much younger, so much less formed in mind and manners than the young men she had been thrown with during the past year. No doubt she was a little spoiled, but many things combined to make her very homesick for those she had left behind on the other side. Everything in her aunts' house, with its old-world associations, served to remind her of her loss. Here, in her own home city, no one knew or suspected the interests that were to her of vital concern; she felt more like a stranger than she had in a strange land. And especially at this time was it hard for her, when all about her were so

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strongly pro-Japan in their sympathies, lauding that nation to the skies, belittling Russia, and gloating over her reverses in the war. Faith was prepared for these reverses. They were what Lyóva had foreseen. He had explained the reason therefor and the certainty that the great white race must conquer in time, but none of those she met cared to listen to her explanation. She had to learn to keep silent, to endure hearing Russia reviled, slandered, held up to scorn, while to the foe were attributed virtues and glories raising them to something above the earth, to demigods and supermen. She had not even the comforts of her religion.

It was fortunate for Faith that she had a kind and resourceful friend in her stepbrother. A habit once formed is hard to drop, and Rupert thought it well to keep up his correspondence with Natália Petróvna, whom he remembered as a sensible, agreeable, well-bred woman of fine bearing, and whose letters showed her to be sympathetic, intelligent, full of kindly feeling toward Faith and devotion to her brother. Through her he kept in touch with Solntsoff, and was able to assure Faith from time to time of his well-being, and also to send her word that the prince believed it more honorable not to write to her until she could obtain her father's explicit consent to their correspondence. He enclosed to her copies of her father's two letters to him, and of the reply in which he had bound himself to an additional year of waiting. To Faith these letters came as a shock. She had written repeatedly to her father, begging him for an explanation to give her uncle, but he had postponed replying till his return.

Mr. Brandon had been delayed in Europe till autumn, and his return brought no good to Faith. Fortified by his daughter Genevieve's counsel at home, and, abroad, by the inflexible logic of the bishop's letters, he held his ground with Faith. Whenever he felt himself weakening, the thought of the contempt these mentors would have for him stiffened

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him to firmness. It was agreed by them that the test must be absolute. Not only must there be no interchange of letters but Faith must surrender to him the souvenirs of her engagement, the betrothal ring, her lover's photograph, the cross and chain that he had given her to wear about her neck after the religious custom of the Russians. Then came the hardest blow. Mr. Brandon could not forbid her exchanging letters with Rupert, but he put her on her honor not to mention Solntsoff's name in them, not to send him or receive from him any messages, directly or indirectly.

And Faith submitted, though it seemed like tearing out her heart, for she believed that Lyéff Petróvich, brought up as he was with the almost patriarchal respect for a parent's blessing that marks the old conservative families of Russia, would think it her duty to obey until she was of legal age. In everything she would try to live up to his ideal for her.

And so the months of the winter passed, and Faith changed with the passing months from wholesome, rosy girlhood to a thinner, more pensive, more spiritualized womanhood. Morning and night and many times a day she turned her face toward Russia and, holding out her hands, begged God to bless her Big Friend, to give them both strength to endure and to trust, and, in His Mercy, to shorten their trial.

It was early in the first month of spring that she was called to the telephone by a message from the City Hospital.

"Yes, I am Miss Faith Brandon. What do you want of me?" she asked.

"We should like you to call and see if you can identify a patient who has just been brought in from the Montreal train in a collapsed condition. He is unable to speak or make a sign, and the only possible means of identification is an envelope addressed to 'Miss Faith Brandon, Mt. Vernon St., Boston.' The train men think he is a Hungarian."

"A Hungarian?" repeated Faith, agitated and wonder-

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ing. "I will come of course, as soon as possible, but can you give me some description of him? I cannot think of any one it is likely to be."

"He has a heavy, dark beard and iron-gray hair. His eyes are closed, so we cannot judge of their color. He is five feet eleven and a half inches in height, and has a large frame, much shrunk from exposure and lack of nourishment. His clothes were coarse and worn, but he looks like a man of refinement. He was practically penniless, yet he was wearing under his shirt a handsome, solid gold, enameled cross about four inches long, hung from his neck by a common piece of twine."

Faith gave a start, and subdued the exclamation that rose to her lips. The metal cross worn about the neck was a religious emblem borne by Russians of all ranks. The man must be a Russian. But why should he have a letter to her?

"I do not recognize the description," she said, "but I will be at the hospital within half an hour. Is there hope of saving him, or is he dying?"

"We have hope. The exhaustion is great, but there is no disease, no injury save a gunshot wound in the shoulder, nearly healed. Organically he is absolutely sound and healthy. He has a really splendid physique, and we are all interested to get him on his feet. It is the heart action which has been weakened by extraordinary privation and exposure."

With a hurried explanation to her aunts that some poor immigrant, who was dying, had a message of some sort for her, Faith hastened to the hospital, where she was at once taken to the men's surgical ward. She was led to a bed at the quietest end of the big, airy room. The face she saw on the pillow was of waxen pallor, the lips blue, the closed eyes sunken and encircled by dark shadows. The features were pinched, the cheeks hollow, the long, tangled dark hair that fell loosely over the brow was streaked with gray, a

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rough, dark beard hid the mouth and chin. Faith stood long studying the face that, in its pallor and stillness, might have been that of a corpse.

"I cannot identify him," she said at last. "I have never seen his face before."

At the sound of her voice a sort of tremor seemed to pass over the corpse-like figure. Suddenly the eyes opened and looked straight up into hers, large, brilliant eyes of darkest gray, with a heavy fringe of jet black lashes.

"Youri!" exclaimed Faith. "Youri von Dovsprung!"

Overcome by the suddenness of the recognition, she slid to her knees by the bedside and the tears rushed to her eyes. She laid one hand over his thin, brown fingers, with the other she brushed the hair across his brow in the old familiar sweep. "George," she called softly in German, "do you recognize little Fidès?"

A faint ghost of a smile crept over the drawn, pallid features, his eyes still sought hers, his lips moved feebly. "Backfischly!" he whispered.

CHAPTER XXIII

VYÉRA

"When on my brow death's cooling airs blow free
And all my days except the last are fled,
I have a wish with upturned face to see
Thy gracious form bent o'er my dying head,
While in thy murmured words my soul might hear
Echoes of angels' voices rolling near."

— *Holmes.*

"If ANY one can save him, you can," said the surgeon. They had taken Dovsprung out of the ward and placed him in a private room, and appointed special nurses for him night and day.

"When we have done everything that skill and care can do, then we come to the psychological point where you can do more than any one of us. We had little hope of pulling him through that last collapse, but the sound of your voice recalled him to life. If you can arrange, Miss Brandon, to be within reach, to be near him as much as possible during the next forty-eight hours, it will be half the battle."

"I will stay," said Faith. "If you will keep me here at the hospital, I will sit up all night and be at your call every moment."

There proved to be a private room vacant which she could have, and after sending a messenger with a note of explanation to her aunts and to bring her what was necessary, she took up her post at the sick man's side. He had brightened so perceptibly in her presence that they urged her to be almost uninterruptedly in the room while his life hung in the balance.

Much faintness and sinking, frequent collapses and wonderful rallyings, made up the record of those critical

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days. Again and again he seemed so far gone that only her voice called back his spirit to the inanimate form. In one of these rallyings the memory came to her of Lyóva's illness, when the consolations of religion had been brought to his bedside, summoned in the same instant as the physician, and how marked the change for the better had been from the moment the priests had anointed him with the Seven Holy Unctions. She knew that in Russia even those who, in health, were indifferent or worse turned in their last hours to Mother Church, and tenderly and beautifully the Church ministered to them.

She bent over Dovsprung and took his hand in hers.

"Youri Andrévich," she whispered in Russian, "can you hear me? Press my hand if it hurts you to talk."

His thin, nerveless fingers faintly pressed hers.

"Would it comfort you to have a clergyman come to see you?"

For a moment there was no answering pressure.

"I know it is an Uniát that you would want," she added hastily, "but if there is no Russian Uniát priest in Boston, I can telegraph to New York, and one will be here by this evening."

Still no pressure. Then she noticed that his lips were moving and she bent her ear close to his mouth.

"Any Catholic will do," he gasped, in a hoarse whisper, "so long as I die — in union — with Rome!"

"You are not going to die, Youri Andrévich!" she said, confidently. "You are going to get well, the Holy Unction will bring you health with God's blessing. A French or German speaking priest will soon be here. Rouse yourself, dear Youri! Have faith! You will be healed!"

She felt a slight pressure on her fingers. She saw that his lips were moving again.

"If I am — unconscious — tell him — I am penitent!"

VYÉRA

Turn my bed — to the East — and let me die — with my face — toward — beloved Russia!”

The effort was too much. The nurse came hastily forward with restoratives, for he had nearly collapsed. When he had revived somewhat, a faint smile crept over his features, as he saw that they had changed the position of the bed.

A few minutes later the priest arrived, a French father from the Jesuit College near by. Faith and the nurse stepped out into the corridor while he bent over the sick man to confess and absolve him. Then he signaled them to re-enter while he administered Extreme Unction.

The Latin rite, which Faith saw for the first time, was short and simple in contrast to the elaborate and impressive ceremony of the Slavonic. The priest said the ritual words softly in Latin and repeated them aloud in French as he anointed with oil the feet and hands, the breast and the organs of the five senses, and prayed for the remission of the sick man's sins, and for his restoration to health if God so willed. The very brevity and simplicity of the rite had a certain suitableness to the plain hospital room, and the weak condition of the patient. After all, a sacrament is a sacrament, it loses none of its holy significance be it administered with few words or many by him to whom due power is given.

The priest in secular dress, with no sign of his office but the slender stole round his neck, the rapidly spoken words, the intense quiet of the narrow, scantily furnished room, the gathering of Russian patient, French priest, German nurse and Irish orderly, all strangers, but united in the One Fold, formed a marked contrast to that other scene in the luxurious palace, where all were of one nation and one national church, the gorgeous robes of the clergy, the chanting of the deacons, the lights, the censers, the varied ceremonials. Youri Andrévich would have had the same in

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his own land, but here, in a foreign country, he was content and at peace, for he was a son of that Church which is universal, not national. The kindly priest was no stranger, but a fellow-man and brother, and they all, Slav and Celt, Teuton and Gaul, were but pilgrims on their way to the heavenly Home under the guidance of one Father, sheep of one flock, under one Pastor.

From that hour Dovsprung's improvement was marked, the collapses were farther apart and less alarming, the periods of rallying longer and stronger, and by the eighth day the physicians pronounced the patient out of danger. They were full of cheerful satisfaction. It had been an interesting case, and he was a man well worth saving.

But the patient looked neither so cheerful nor so satisfied.

"Why did they not let me die?" he complained to Faith, "my soul shriven, your dear arms supporting me! Oh, Fidès, why must I come back to my lonely struggle? I have faced death so often, I would have given my life so gladly, so gayly, for beloved Russia! In the darkest hours your presence was with me in spirit, and now that it is a blessed reality, Death has played me false!"

The end of the third week saw him sitting up in bed. It was a great occasion, for as a surprise to Faith, who was now at home again but who visited him daily, he had been shaven save for his moustache, and had his hair closely cut and brushed across the brow in the old familiar way.

As he lay there, propped up in a half-sitting position, his dark, glossy head outlined against the white pillows, the lines of suffering gone from his face, the hollow places fast filling out, Faith thought him handsomer even than in the old days. His well-cut features were spiritualized and refined by pain and sorrow, and the somewhat bold brilliancy of his eyes was softened and shadowed. She came to his bedside, radiant with the pleasure she felt

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in seeing him so nearly restored to his former health and beauty.

"Ah, how good it is to see you like your old self once more! You have never yet told me what happened to reduce you to such terrible straits and how you came to wander here. Do you feel strong enough now to give me the story?" she asked, as she took a seat facing him.

"Hardly, I would rather you talked to me," he replied unwillingly. "Yet you ought to know. I had reached C —, a Chinese port, just before the war broke out. We had two warships there and the night of my arrival some of my friends on the ships came ashore to have supper with me. We were talking over the possibility of war and where we were likely to be ordered, but we had no thought of any immediate trouble, when word came that the Japanese fleet was outside the harbor and summoned our ships to surrender or disarm. Several officers from other warships, German and English, were with us at table when the summons came like a bolt from a clear sky. It was a most affecting scene, Fidès. Our commander replied that he would neither surrender to the Japanese nor would he accept the shelter of a neutral port to disarm. He would go out and fight! Of course it meant death to all,—two cruisers against a big fleet of battleships! I simply had to go with them, I could not desert friends, I might as well die for Russia then as later. But the German and English fellows broke down completely to see us go. They wept, they cheered, they took us up on their shoulders —"

He stopped, from fatigue and emotion. Faith, all flushed and tearful from sympathy, begged him to rest, to tell her another time.

"It didn't take long to finish us," he said, with a sad smile. "The whole fleet opened fire on us. The scenes were too terrible to describe. The captain opened the valves to sink the ships before they should be captured.

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I should have liked to go down with the ship, but a fellow who couldn't swim had clutched me by the belt, and I had to try to keep alive and seek safety for his sake. We were picked up by Japanese boats. They took good care of us, and they, too, cheered and gave us an ovation. But it was a hateful thing to feel one's self a prisoner. I would far rather have been killed."

"But you are free and safe now," said Faith, with a half-sob.

"There are times when one does not want to be safe," he sighed. "The few of us who were rescued from that carnage refused to give parole. We wanted to be able to fight again if we could escape, so we were shipped to a Japanese prison. There we stagnated for five weary months till they removed us to another prison, when five of us managed to dive from the transport. Two were caught, and one was shot and drowned; but two of us were lucky enough to get away, though I was hit in the shoulder, and after about three hours in the water we took refuge on a Chinese junk. We had no money and they would not go out of their way to land us for several weeks. At this Chinese port I was ill for two months from inflammation in my wounded shoulder. We lost more time in vain efforts to reach Russian territory by land. It was useless to attempt to get passports as Russians. We tried all kinds of disguises, but the Chinese officials were very watchful and suspicious, and we were caught, and two or three times came near having our heads chopped off. Finally, I passed myself off as a German, and shipped as a stoker on a steamer bound for Vancouver."

"A stoker! Graf von Dovsprung, *arbiter elegantiarum*, a stoker!"

"A good disguise, was it not?" he said, ruefully. "Well, our vessel was wrecked on the Columbian coast. The long exposure, added to what I had been through before, brought

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on another illness, an ignominious ending to a pitiable year. O God! What a wretched record for a soldier! We had escaped in — practically nothing, and the first civilized spot we reached I sold the gold chain from which my cross hung. It bought me a rough, workman's suit, and an emigrant ticket to Montreal. There I was stranded again for want of money. I could not let it be known I was a Russian officer, or I should have been held in a neutral port and not permitted to return to the seat of war. I was too weakened by privation to ship again as sailor or stoker, so I tried in one way or another to earn enough for a steerage passage to Europe. Then came my first collapse."

He paused again for breath. Faith brought him his stimulant, and insisted on his having some broth and a little rest before he finished his story. How pitiful it was to see this gallant, dashing officer reduced to such weakness and dependence!

"I thought I was dying there, alone," he resumed, looking up at her pathetically. "I read the papers eagerly for war news, and it did not help me to get well. I used to cry like a child over my country's trouble and my own cursed impotence. Then one day the paper had mention of your name, a little item saying that a young Montreal lady had returned from visiting Miss Faith Brandon, in Boston, at her aunts' residence. Can you imagine, Fidès, what it was to me to find myself so near you? If I was to die I hoped it might be in your arms, or, if I did not live to reach you, that you would at least see me buried and say a prayer for me. I put the few dollars I had earned into a ticket for Boston, hung my crucifix around my neck that they might know me for a Christian, and put your address in a conspicuous place. Then I staggered on to the train. They were kind to me. I don't know at what period of the journey I collapsed, but I knew nothing more till I heard the blessed tones of your sweet voice. Oh, Fidès, Fidès, my beloved! I had wished

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to die in your arms, but I had to live, for my soul knew your voice and rushed to meet you from the grave!"

It broke Faith's tender heart to see the look in his eyes, to know that he loved her so! Oh, if she could only console this man's sick and lonely spirit! Lyóva, far away in St. Petersburg, in the safety and comfort of his civilian calling, healthy and well-fed, with relatives and friends about him, did not seem to need her aid. This poor, broken, heroic soldier, whose life Fate had laid between her hands, did need her and, shaken to the soul with pity, it seemed as if she should hesitate at no sacrifice to comfort him!

The sound of his voice came to her, weak and hoarse, but with a thrill of eagerness in it. "Fidès! What does it all mean? You are not yet married — you are not wearing your betrothal ring — for God's sake, how does it stand between you and Solntsoff?"

Faith heard the thrill in his voice and knew that the decisive moment had come. Now or never she must close the door of hope to him. Her gentle ministrations, her compassion, her tenderness had been given and received in all innocence and loyalty while he was still in the shadow of death. But to continue now to give way to that pity which is akin to love would but encourage his reviving passion, to hesitate now would mean to promise herself to him. Oh, it was cruel that this little bit of hope should have crept into his heart! How could she give his poor, broken spirit another blow?

"We — we are still betrothed before God and our own hearts," she forced herself to say, between half-stifled sobs. "My father has broken our engagement unconditionally, and I cannot marry without his consent till I am twenty-one, but neither of us has agreed to consider it broken. Oh, Youri, I am so — so unhappy! We cannot write each other — it is so hard, so hard!" and she bent her head and covered her face with her hands.

VYÉRA

There was a long silence. Youri Andrévich had turned his head aside and closed his eyes. When at last he opened them once more and spoke, his voice, though still weak, was quite steady again.

"Poor little Fidès!" he murmured. "You have been very unselfish in your kindness to this poor wreck of a man, and never let him know in all these weeks how sorrowful your own gentle spirit was!" He stretched out his hand over her head, not touching it, but hovering just above it, as if in blessing. "Can I be of any use or comfort to you, Fidès?"

Surprised and frightened by the strength of her emotion Faith struggled to regain her composure, and rising, walked over to the window. When she turned back again a moment later, she was quite calm and smiling sadly.

"You have already given me comfort, dear Youri," she said, softly. "I have been so glad to nurse you, for the sake of beloved Russia, for the sake of all who have known and loved you there, and for your own dear sake. For you are dearer to me than I can well tell you. I can hardly understand it myself ——"

"But I understand," he interrupted, closing his eyes wearily. "You pity me! Your tender heart is full of compassion for me, you have become attached to this poor wreck of humanity whom you have twice rescued, once from the death of the soul, and now from the death of the body. You would sacrifice your happiness to mine, were it only right for you to do so; you would not have the heart to deny me, were it not that another man's happiness depends upon your fidelity, and that for him you feel, not pity — but love! I understand it all only too well, Fidès! Do not be unhappy about me. At least," he smiled a little bitterly, "I may feel I have brought you some comfort in reminding you of Russia and of Lyéff Petróvich, may I not?" and he looked up inquiringly at her sad, sweet face.

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She bent her head gently, but did not answer in words. It seemed to Dovsprung as if in that moment he expiated all the sins of vanity and presumption of his entire life, he who had been so courted and so loved! He sighed profoundly.

"Oh, forgive me, Youri, I am a poor nurse, indeed, to let you get so fatigued," she exclaimed, penitently. "But I am going to send some one to see you to-morrow who will be very cheering and strong, and who can perhaps be of use to you in a practical way; and until then I will surrender you to a better nurse than I." And she stepped to the corridor to call the attendant.

That evening she telephoned Brandon Ludlow to join her at dinner. Youri Andrévich would, of course, need some man friend to provide him with money and clothes and to help him in many practical details, for he would not wish to apply to the Russian consul at a neutral port for fear of embarrassing him. Brandy was just the fellow! He liked adventure, he had plenty of money, and he could keep a secret. Why had she not thought of him before?

During dinner the conversation was general, for the aunts still supposed her patient at the hospital to be some poor emigrant. After dinner Miss Adèle, ensconced in her high armchair by the fire, worked for a while at her embroidery frame, till at last her head nodded, her eyes closed and her hands fell idly in her lap. Miss Louisa sat by the lamp at the writing-table and prepared some notes for a new lecture on Camoëns. Faith, having duly poked the fire and lighted the lamp for her aunts, and brought out the reference books, drew Brandon off to a quiet corner and confided to him about the fugitive.

Brandon was delighted with the confidence, and touched and interested by the wanderings of Dovsprung, whom he remembered well from the meeting on the Black Sea steamer, and the day at Odessa. He was glad to serve Faith and

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pleased to play a part in an adventure. He went to the hospital the next morning armed with a note from his cousin, and placed himself, his tailor, his automobile and his bank account at Dovsprung's disposal.

"He is a corking good fellow," he told Faith, enthusiastically on his return. "He accepted me unconditionally, the machine with effusion, and the bank account with reservations; but we understand each other perfectly. I found him sitting up in a rocking-chair, swathed in hideous hospital blankets, and clothed in an unspeakable hospital shirt, like some old pauper. I have sent him down a Morris chair, some decent linen and a ripping bathrobe. My tailor is to take his measures this afternoon. Rotten food, too, they're giving him, nothing but slops and chops! I've sent up some birds, a dozen pints of champagne and a basket of fruit."

Faith let the day pass without going to the hospital. The patient would have had enough, she thought, with Brandon's breezy visit. Besides, he did not really need her now, and was it quite just, quite true either to him, to herself, or to the man who had received her promise, for her to spend so much time in Dovsprung's company?

Again and again, throughout the day and through many wakeful hours of the night, his pale, handsome face, with its great, sad, pleading eyes, came before her vision; his voice, so weak and yet with that thrill of emotion in it, sounded in her ears. He — he loved her so!

Then she would resolutely close her eyes to the present. She no longer saw Youri Andrévich lying there in illness, loneliness and poverty, a stranger in a strange land, with none but her to care. She no longer thought of Lyéff Petróvich as safe, comfortable, at liberty among his own people, loving and loved. Her mind traveled back to that other scene when, once before, she had been called upon to make a choice between these same two men. She saw the dash-

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ing figure of Graf von Dovsprung, the worldling and libertine, stalwart and proud in his splendid uniform and glistening orders, while stretched on the floor at her feet she seemed to see the white, lifeless form of Solntsoff, stricken down in the midst of health and strength by the shock of her supposed inconstancy!

A sharp spasm seemed to grip her heart, she lifted her head and threw out her arms with a little cry of pain.

"Lyóva!" she gasped, "Lyóva! it is not as you think! Dear, Big Friend! your Little Comrade is staunch and true! Oh, Lyóva, my first love, my last, my only love, there is no one else! No one shall ever come between us!"

And then she would sink on her knees, and pray God to help them all, and cry as if her heart were breaking!

CHAPTER XXIV

TRUE LOVE

"But oh, my Heart! my heart's Desire!
My ungained dream divine!
That never turned the while I yearned,
Nor closed her hand in mine."

—Garrison.

WHEN Faith returned to the hospital two days later she found her patient not quite so well.

"He has been over-exerting himself; he would write a long letter yesterday, and nearly collapsed after it," they told her.

"Do not scold me!" he said; holding out his hand and smiling cheerfully. "Now that you are here I am all right again. Let me first thank you for sending your cousin to me. I had been worrying about many things which he has taken off my mind. Now I will confess what I have done. Can you divine?"

"No," she said, though with a little flutter of premonition.

"I have written Lyóva," he explained, watching with a certain sad pleasure the color that flooded her cheeks. "I told him everything that I had heard from you, and much that your cousin told me in addition. I described to him how you looked, how you suffered in the deprivation of news from him. I told him about the trials you were undergoing, but said that nothing could divide your heart from him, not even the angelic compassion of your tender woman's soul for the unhappy lover you had so devotedly nursed back from the grave." He sighed. "He ought to be a happy and triumphant man when he reads that letter. He will feel, of

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course, for your suffering and trouble, but above all will be the triumph of your constancy and love."

"Oh, Youri Andrévich, how good you are! How good you are!" she stammered, turning her head aside for a moment and shading her eyes with her hand. But gathering herself together quickly, she smiled brightly, almost gayly at him and held out toward him a tiny parcel.

"I did not know what you had done for me when I chose this for you," she explained. "It was wholly from disinterested affection and friendship; but now it comes in very nicely as a reward of virtue."

He took the box from her and opened it. Within lay a long gold chain, light and smooth, yet strongly made, to be worn about the neck. Faith had been at a good deal of pains to find what she thought suitable, and he would never know what a strain on her slender purse it had been to meet the cost. He lifted the chain from its box and looked up at her, and now it was his turn to stammer and be overcome.

"For me?" he asked. "You give this to me, Fidès? You!"

For answer she unfastened from about his neck the narrow ribbon which the nurse had attached to his cross, in the place of the coarse string he had been wearing when brought to the hospital. She slipped the chain through the ring of the exquisitely enameled, flat crucifix, then, reverently kissing the cross, she signed him with it, and clasped the chain about his throat.

He seized her hands and pressed them gratefully to his lips. Then he let them go and grasped the chain.

"Oh, Fidès, a gift from you, that I may hold to, night and day, as to my hope of heaven! Ah, how I used to long for some little, least thing to cherish that had once been yours! So little would have satisfied me, and now you give me this, binding my love to my religion in sacred union to

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my grave. No torment of starvation or death shall ever wrest it from me."

She was determined to keep him away from the dangerous topic of sentiment, and forced herself to laugh and say cheerfully, "You will be in no danger of starving so long as Brandon Ludlow looks after you. There will be far more danger of dying of plethora, while in his hands. But listen, Youri! I am going to give you an incentive for getting well rapidly. You must hurry and get strong enough to drive round and see me at my aunts' home, for I am not coming to the hospital any more."

"Not coming any more!" he exclaimed. He looked down very gravely. "What have I done, Fidès, that you should punish me so severely? Should I not have asked if you were free? Was that one question so very indiscreet?"

"Oh, Youri, forgive me! Indeed, you must not look upon it as a punishment. You have been so loyal, so kind. It is not that, indeed, but I — do you not see? I want to be true in the spirit as well as in the letter — you are nearly well now — there is nothing more for me to do — if I continue coming it will only be harder in the end. Oh, Youri, please try to see it as I see it!"

"I do!" he said, with a groan. "You are right! Your work of mercy is done, you should not come any more." He turned his head aside, and it seemed to him as if the light of the whole world went out. He had so counted on seeing her every day; he had so hung upon every look of her angelic face, every tone of her sweet voice. What had he to live for now? Her presence removed, his health shattered, his life useless,—all was dark and hopeless. He could not even die!

Faith understood, but she made an effort to be cheerful, to keep herself from dangerous pity and to divert his mind, as one would that of a child. She hardly knew what she said, but talk she must, to relieve the situation.

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"You are going to have a spin in Brandy's automobile the first favorable day. After you have had two or three drives and the fresh air has made you strong again, you will come to my aunts' house as their guest for a while. You will find them congenial and interesting. They talk the languages and are used to European court life."

Dovsprung roused himself. He must pull himself together, he must remember the conventionalities and not expect another man's betrothed to visit him every day and listen to his lovelorn sighings! Fidès was, as always, her exquisite, conscientious, adorable self; she was doing as he would wish his own betrothed to do, she was following the unerring instincts of her own noble, fine and loyal nature. Should he not have known that it must end this way?

"I remember hearing you speak of your aunts," he said, politely. "I shall avail myself very gratefully of the opportunity of meeting them in the home you are so much attached to."

At this moment one of the nurses entered to take her patient's pulse and temperature.

"He missed you yesterday," she said pleasantly to Faith. "It was the worst night he has had since the first week. We cannot allow you to neglect your patient again." She was a German and she spoke in that language.

Dovsprung looked up quickly. "I am going to move back into the ward to-morrow," he said to the nurse, "and it will not be so agreeable for Miss Brandon to visit me there. She will not come any more for a while, and in a few days I shall hope to be well enough to return some of her kind visits."

"Oh, I didn't know you were going to move. I hadn't been given any instructions yet," apologized the nurse. "My! We shall miss having Miss Brandon's visits. How are you ever going to get well without her?"

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When the kindly German had left the room, Dovsprung turned to Faith in explanation.

"I am afraid your cousin will be offended to have me give up the room, when he has done so much to make it comfortable for me; but you, Fidès, will understand that I must now have something to help me forget, something to take me out of myself. I must learn to interest myself in the sorrows and sufferings of others, and remember that mine is not the only broken heart, not the only disappointed, hopeless, useless life in the world. I should grow morbid here, this simple little room is so associated with you, it has been so illuminated by your presence, so glorified for me by your sweet spirit, it has been so blest! Oh, Fidès, I have done such foolish things here! Since I have been well enough, these last few days and nights, to step about a little alone, I have been down on my knees and kissed the floor that your feet have trod, the things that your hands have touched ——"

"Oh, don't, don't, Youri!" cried Faith, tremulously, "Indeed you are right to leave it! It is high time to get over such folly! But let me tell you, dear friend, how this room has been blest to me, too! If ever I have unconsciously been of help to your soul, as you tell me I have been, then you, too, have been of help to me, here, in this same precious room."

"I — I, of help to your soul, Fidès?"

"Listen, Youri! My father and uncle wished to withdraw me from the influence of the Russian Church because they believed me to be only carried away by its wonderful music and impressive ceremonies. And I, too, had begun to fear that much of what I had thought was faith might be only sentiment, for I missed so inexpressibly the angelic, super-humanly beautiful music, the mystic grandeur of the ceremonies. But here, in this room, by your sick-bed, I came to know that my faith is independent of external

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beauty of surrounding. For when the sacraments were administered to you in a rite that was strange to me, and in such quiet and simplicity, it was yet as real, as holy to me, I could say 'Vyéruiu, — I believe!' with as much confidence as at the most solemn ceremonies in Russia! And I realized, as uever before, how truly we are one Church!"

He looked at her very gravely and wistfully. "One Church, Fidès?" he asked.

"Why, yes! Youri," she replied, smiling brightly toward him. "I know that you feel differently about Unity, that you think union with Rome essential, and that question troubled me for a while. But I asked Lyóva and Father Spiridion about it, and they explained to me that while the churches of the East and the West have often been outwardly united they are always spiritually one Church in doctrine, in the sacramental life, in the Eucharistic worship; and that the only question that divides them is one of politics, not of doctrine."

"Of politics?" repeated Dovsprung, inquiringly.

"Yes, a question of government, the question of the Papal prerogatives. They made it clear to me that national autonomy does not mean schism, any more than difference of language and ceremony means difference of belief. You Uniáts are an instance of different language and different ceremonies within the Catholic Church itself. Yet you felt, did you not, Youri, when you received the sacraments by the Roman instead of the Slavonic rite, that they were absolutely the same?"

"Yes, absolutely! But Fidès ——"

"What is it?" she asked.

He hesitated. She was so happy in her understanding of Unity, this explanation meant so much to her, how could he disturb her? As she saw things now she was at one with her lover. How could he say what would serve to separate

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her from her betrothed? If he had a shred of manly honor left, Dovsprung felt that he must not say anything that might part these two.

Yet, on the other hand, was there not such a thing as a heavenly honor which required a man to confess the faith that is in him? Were there not moments when silence would be taken as acquiescence, when it would be betraying the Lord Christ to keep still?

"What is it, Youri?" she asked again, encouragingly, for she saw his hesitation and struggle.

"Forgive me, Fidès," and his eyes looked appealingly out at her from the shadows of his thin, pallid face. "I cannot see it as a question of politics. Our Saviour prayed His Heavenly Father that His Church might be one with a Unity that the world could not but recognize. The historic development of the Papacy, therefore, is no mere political scheme, no mere accident of chance, but is part of the Divine plan. It was instituted by Christ Himself to preserve Unity. There are no words in all of Holy Scripture so plain and so striking as Christ's promises to Peter. In all the centuries of Christian history there is no one, living fact that stands out before us as does the Papacy, the fulfilment of these promises. Of all the churches founded by apostles none are living in their ancient sees, full of strength and vitality, save only the Church of Rome, the See of Peter! *Tu es Petrus et super hanc Petram aedificabo Ecclesiam Meam!*"

He sank back exhausted and trembling. Faith hastily administered a stimulant and, wiping the moisture from his brow, rang for the nurse.

"Forgive me!" he whispered. "I feel like a brute, it has almost killed me to contradict you, Fidès, but — I had to speak!"

"No, no! I brought it on myself! You could not do otherwise than speak. Do not distress yourself, dear Youri.

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From my heart, I thank God for you that you have the gift of faith!"

"The heavenly Faith is all that is given me," he whispered, half-sadly, half-playfully.

She surrendered him to the nurse's care and, with a silent pressure of the hand, left him.

But a sort of terror had come over her. What if she were to see Unity even as Youri Andrévich saw it? What would it all involve? What new obstacles would it raise? Where would it all end?

She had been so happy in all that the Orthodox Church had to offer her, the certainty of its orders, of its sacraments, of its doctrines — untouched since the early Œcumenical Councils. She had accepted so joyously, with such fervent faith, its devotions and holy practices, sealed by ages of apostolic tradition; its magnificent liturgy, an heritage from the earliest centuries. Yet the Uniáts had all this, all that she treasured and gloried in, and beyond this they were united with the See of that Apostle to whom such wonderful promises had been made! Must she believe that union with the See of Peter was divinely ordained, — that with all they had of truth and beauty the Eastern churches were yet in schism? Was her own hand to raise the final barrier between herself and her lover?

She recalled how Lyóva had once said to her earnestly: "The Roman allegiance is the only thing that would be an insuperable obstacle to our marriage! You could remain a Protestant and yet accept the conditions of a mixed marriage, but as a Roman Catholic you could not accept the legal and ecclesiastical conditions of marriage with a member of the Russian State Church. Nor could I leave my church without incurring exile and loss of citizenship."

Faith shivered. "Lord, help Thou mine unbelief!" she prayed.

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When Brandon returned from his next visit to the hospital, he rushed up to Faith's room in some excitement.

"I declare," he burst out, "I don't know whether to be angry or to cry! What do you think that crazy fellow has done? He has gone and given up his room and had himself moved back into the ward with all those poor working men! And there he is, still wearing those dreadful hospital shirts. He said he hadn't the heart to put on the fine things I sent him before those poor fellows, who were in such distress, wondering how their families were going to get food and clothes during their illness."

"I know how it makes me feel," said Faith. "It makes me want to cry!"

"He said," went on Brandon, "that he had moved into the ward for company. I asked what companionship he could have with such a rough class, and he said we Americans had not the first notion of democracy and brotherhood as Russians understand it. And indeed it would do you good to see the pleasant terms he is on with them all. He was passing the fruit I had given him to the rough laboring fellows in the next beds, and they were dividing it up with their neighbors, and he was talking so courteously and genially with them all in three or four languages, and knew all about their families and their histories already. I didn't have to ask him about the birds and the champagne, for the head-nurse told me he had given all the stuff to her for some of the poor women convalescents. A pretty way to treat the things I spent my pocket money on!"

Brandy heaved a sigh. "I say, Faith! I don't know much about philanthropy, but I think it would be rather a good idea to look up some of these poor chaps' families, and see if there was anything one could do. Don't you think so?"

"It is part of religion, as the apostle defined it," suggested

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Faith, "'to visit the widows and the fatherless in their affliction, and to keep one's self unspotted from the world.'"

"I suspect that the first part of the job is easier than the last half," commented Brandy.

He visited his patient daily, with ever-increasing interest, and made frequent reports to Faith of his improvement.

"He doesn't seem as much upset about this war as you would think," he told her. "He says that they knew it would take a year to get a well-equipped army out there, and that the Japanese have really made less headway than was expected. In fifteen months they have advanced only one hundred and twenty-five miles from the sea and are still over four hundred miles from the Russian frontier, and every day it is getting harder for them to advance, as the Russians are getting nearer a numerical equality. He says what he fears most is a premature peace. Russia is only beginning to show her strength, her best regiments are still in Europe, and she should be allowed to fight it out to the finish, as the English did in South Africa."

Here Brandon broke off and began to pace the room uneasily. "But we have talked on a lot of other subjects, too, bully heart to heart talks that have done me a lot of good. We never mention your name, though. You are much too sacred to be discussed with poor me. Faith! He has such beautiful ideals. I can't explain it to you exactly, but he would make a splendid husband. His wife would never have to suffer from anxiety or jealousy. He would be a very faithful, tender husband."

"I think he would," she agreed. "Yes, as I know him now, I am sure he would."

"That is a great thing to be sure of, Faith. You cannot know as much of the world as I do," continued Brandy, patronizingly, "so you may not appreciate him; but with his fidelity, his great personal charm, and his romantic devotion to you I don't see how you can resist him."

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"But I am engaged to another man," said Faith, in a low voice.

"Pshaw! That is all off. You are as free as I am," declared her cousin. "Solntsoff was a ripping fine fellow all right, but this man would be a better husband for you. All your gifts would go to waste with Solntsoff, who is absorbed in his own career and only cares for your mind because it enables you to sympathize with him and be of use to him. You will slave for him and live for his work, and never develop your own talents or dream of having a career of your own. But Dovsprung worships the ground you tread on. He would put you first in everything, and devote his life to you and encourage your talents. You have literary gifts. You ought to have a career of your own, and he would be the man to put you up to it. Mark my words! If you marry the literary fellow you will never be anything but his housekeeper and his stenographer, while you would be the other man's Vittoria Colonna!"

"I am not so sure as you are that I am fitted for any other career than housekeeper and stenographer," said Faith, a little sadly.

Brandon fancied that she looked dejected, and gathered courage to say what was on his mind.

"Are you very, very sure of your own heart, Faithie, or are you clinging to Solntsoff only from sense of duty and loyalty? It would be horrible to make such a mistake. It would end in your all three being unhappy, while if you choose the one you love best, then at least two of you three will be happy. The other man of course would feel badly, but you couldn't make him happy by sacrificing yourself and marrying him from pity."

"I know. Lyóva told me the same thing long ago," said Faith, but her voice was tremulous and she turned her face away.

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She was silent so long that Brandon fancied she must be crying. He stole up to her and put his arm gently about her.

"Faithie, won't you tell me? Won't you let me help you? You can talk to me, you know, without breaking your word, as I am in the secret."

"Oh, Brandy," she sighed, "there's nobody but you that I can speak to about it. Oh, I want him so! I want him so! It seems as if my heart would break!"

"You shall have him!" declared Brandy. "What's to prevent? Isn't he at your feet, eating his heart out for you? I'll go and tell him, and raise him to the seventh heaven."

Faith lifted her head and stared at her cousin. "I always say things wrong," she exclaimed. "It seems as if I hadn't any sense. Brandy, you don't understand! There's nothing you can do. It is the other one I want, my big, best friend, my Prince Fair-Sun," and she laid her head on her cousin's shoulder and began to cry.

Brandy looked disappointed. "I suppose that settles it," he said, unwillingly, and with such a long-drawn sigh of resignation that Faith had to wipe away her tears and smile tenderly at him.

"Listen, Brandy," she explained. "I have been thinking it out from every point of view. It was my duty toward both men to do so, and I know very well where I stand. I know how badly you feel for Count von Dovsprung; I, too, am broken-hearted about him. I see the whole beauty of his feeling for me and all that I signify to him. There was a moment, just a moment, when it seemed as if I could be more to him than to the other man, when it seemed as if I ought to forget Lyóva and learn to love Youri, because he needed me more. But I know better now. It would have been a terrible mistake. Brandy, Knyáz Solntsoff loves me, and Graf von Dovsprung does not love me."

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"Faith, what do you mean? That man adores you with the deepest, most beautiful affection I ever dreamed of!"

Faith shook her head. "It is not I at all whom he adores. He loves an exquisite ideal, an angelic illusion, a perfect being who doesn't exist, a creation of his own spirit which he calls *Fidès*! It is doing him infinite good to love this *Fidès* of his; it is changing his life and making a magnificent man of him. But what has his *Fidès* in common with me, with Faith Brandon? Nothing but a faint suggestion! It would be the worst thing in the world for him to win me, it would spoil his whole illusion, and I should be wretched in knowing that the real *Fidès* had brought him down from the height of his ideal to the lower level of her imperfect reality."

"It wouldn't spoil his illusion," growled Brandy in dissent. "He is so far gone that he would never see your faults, if you had any."

"Now, Lyéff Petróvich," continued Faith, heedless of the interruption, "also loves me in a wonderful way that makes me very humble, but it is a sensible, matter-of-fact way that is very consoling to me. For he loves my real self, he knows and always has known my faults and shortcomings. He will suffer no disillusion, because he has no stupid illusions. He has high ideals for me, but he does not make me his ideal. I am not an impossible angel, but just his everyday, loving Little Comrade. Even thus, he thinks far better of me than I deserve, but only enough to inspire me to try to deserve it. And, oh, Brandy, I can turn to him in every event of life as my best friend! I have thought of the future, of all that might happen, of poverty, exile, illness, of all the practical things of everyday life. He will have his cross days, I suppose, for he is human and has a temper of his own; and I shall have my unreasonable ones, doubtless, and things will go wrong with us, just as they do in other households. But I can face it all without any misgivings, hand in hand with Lyóva. Even

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if he gets old, and bald, and stout, and infirm, as he is very likely to do, there is always his splendid mentality. And — even — if he should lose that, dreadful as it would be, I would rather be his broken-hearted, loving nurse and guardian than any other man's queen."

There was a long pause. "That sounds like what they call 'true love,'" observed Brandon, at last.

CHAPTER XXV

AFTER MANY YEARS

"He who hath bent him o'er the Dead
Ere the last look of life is fled —
The first dark day of nothingness,
The last of danger and distress —
Before Decay's effacing fingers
Have swept the lines where Beauty lingers,
And marked the mild, angelic air,
The rapture of repose that's there"

— *Byron*

DOVSPRUNG had taken two or three short rides in Brandon's automobile, and now felt strong enough to make an appointment to call on the Ludlow ladies. Faith rejoiced that he should meet her aunts, and that the only American home of which he would have a glimpse was one which, though modest in size, spoke so much of old world culture. She regretted that the ladies should not have a vision of Youri Andrévich in all the splendor of his picturesque uniform, to remind them of the brilliant days of their youth at foreign courts; but he was a handsome, gallant-looking man in any guise, even in the hospital garb that Brandon so loathed.

But Brandon's tailor had done well by his foreign customer; and Dovsprung, though still somewhat pale and hollow-eyed, made a very distinguished figure as he entered the narrow drawing-room of the Mt. Vernon Street house. The two ladies stood up to receive him, and with a stately courtesy extended their hands cordially to him. He bowed low before them and kissed their hands with great respect, and then turned to salute Faith. But even as he turned Miss Adèle, who had grown very pale, without a word of excuse or warning left the room, in evident great agitation. Miss

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Louisa started to follow her; but the older lady waved her away and mounted the stairs alone to her room.

Miss Louisa returned at once to their guest and, seating herself, motioned him to sit by her, while Faith fetched them cake and wine. For a time she conversed with him in French, asking about his health and his return to Europe, then without apparent connection inquired if he had relatives in Budapest. He replied in the affirmative.

"You must excuse my seeming curiosity," said Miss Louisa, who in her turn looked somewhat agitated, "but you bear an altogether extraordinary resemblance to a friend of our youth whose estates were in Hungary."

"My mother was of the Magyar nobility," replied Dovsprung. "She died when I was only ten years old, but I have often visited her family in Budapest. She was a Princess Dhaun-ap-Erdöd."

Miss Louisa's agitation increased perceptibly. "My sister Adèle was betrothed in her youth to Prince George Erdödy," she almost whispered.

"My uncle!" exclaimed Dovsprung, "for whom I was named!"

"How strange!" murmured Faith. "I have never before heard her lover's name."

"I always knew," said Dovsprung, gently, "that my uncle, who married an altgravine of Salm, had had a previous attachment, and that on his sudden death in a hunting accident, a few months after his marriage, he was found to be wearing the miniature of his early love. His wife was noble enough to respect the fidelity of his affection, and the miniature was buried with him."

The tears filled Miss Louisa's fine eyes. "My poor sister never knew that," she said. "She heard of his death, and mourned him truly, for the match was broken off through no fault on either side. He was the eldest son, it was imperative that he should marry, and she had no word of blame for

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him when he did so. She only prayed for his peace of mind and domestic happiness. By a strange coincidence to-day is the anniversary of his death. She had been thinking of him and was the more prepared to be disturbed by this truly remarkable resemblance. It was as if he himself had walked into the room. I also was startled, for you seemed as one risen from the grave."

Dovsprung's eyes were moist with sympathy. "Would your sister care to see me," he asked, "when she recovers from her first agitation? Would the assurance of his fidelity to her memory bring her consolation, or would my further presence only disturb her? I beg you to dismiss me, if I only revive her sorrow in vain."

"I will go to my sister, if you will excuse me. She does not yet know of the connection. She thinks the likeness accidental. If she will receive you, I will summon you," and Miss Louisa withdrew with a certain stately solemnity.

"How fate brings its revenges," exclaimed Dovsprung bitterly, turning to Faith. "My uncle broke her heart, and all her youth and womanhood have been wasted in mourning him. Now her niece avenges her by breaking his nephew's heart, and I in turn must mourn away all the strength of my manhood for her sake." He clinched his hands and his face was stern and white. "Why do I mourn like a weak woman?" he muttered between his teeth. "Why do I sit still in meek resignation like that delicate invalid upstairs and let my happiness be taken from me? Why do I not act? Why do I not go ahead and win you like a man, in spite of all?"

Faith was startled by his vehemence and the scarcely repressed passion of his manner. "I hoped — I thought — you were getting over it," she faltered.

He looked sharply at her. "Do you not suppose I would get over it, if I could?" he said bitterly. "I am a proud

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man; and if pride could do it, I should have been healed long ago. But do not deceive yourself. Do not think me tamed down forever into a calm Platonic friend, a kindly, matter-of-fact elder brother! No! Your place in my life, in my heart, is something that no other woman can ever fill. I must go on loving you, and you must pity and forgive, if hope dies hard within me. On the day that I learn you are irrevocably lost to me I shall be a desperate man. I shall fling my poor, broken heart to the first who wants it, in heaven or in hell!"

Faith moved impulsively toward him with outstretched hands. "Youri!" she cried, "Heaven wants your heart! If you cannot give it to a holy love of earth, then fling it to the Heaven that is leading you, that loves you more than I or any other poor, imperfect human heart could ever love you! Youri, look up! have faith! I will pray for you night and day, all my life! Your soul is dearer to me than my own earthly happiness. If you should fall now, it seems to me I could never smile again!" She sank on her knees and covered her face with her hands. "Oh, may God bless you with consolations far above those of earth and make you happier, far happier than I, with all my faults, could ever have made you!" she sobbed.

"Fidès! Fidès!" cried Dovsprung in distress, inwardly cursing himself for a selfish brute to have so worked on her sympathies. O God! if only he could take her in his arms and comfort her! "I am not worth one of your precious tears, Backfischly! But you shall not shed any more for me. Forgive me the unworthy threat that slipped from me in a moment of anguish! Should I fall when I have the promise of your prayers to follow me night and day, wherever I may go? No, no! I give you my word, Fidès, your chain shall bind my soul to holy ideals till the hour that I must surrender it into the merciful hands of God for all eternity!"

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He raised her to her feet, and she smiled at him with eyes radiant through her tears.

"You make me very happy!" she cried joyfully. "I want always to have the vision of you as St. George the Victorious, slaying the dragon of sin, triumphant over self and the world! Ah, St. George! dear St. George! the happiest day of my life will be when I know that I am nothing more than a holy memory to you, that your noble, beautiful love for me, for Faith, has served God's purpose as a mere stepping-stone to lead you higher on the mountains of a Heavenly Faith, where earthly love shall be forgotten!"

He could not speak. The words choked in his throat. He gave her one beautiful look from his brilliant, expressive eyes, then turned away and walked toward the window.

Faith understood that this was a moment when he should be alone with his emotions. She stole out of the room and went upstairs to inquire for Aunt Adèle.

She found Miss Louisa in great alarm. Her sister sat quietly in her high armchair, with folded hands and unseeing eyes, her mind wandering confusedly in the past. It was impossible to bring her to any comprehension of the present. She was evidently in a serious condition.

Dovsprung, distressed at the trouble he had unconsciously brought, was thankful to be of service in taking the automobile to fetch first the physician, and then Brandon Ludlow. He returned to the hospital, weary in mind and body, after arranging with Brandon to be kept informed of the invalid's condition, and to be sent for if there was anything he could do.

"To have received so much from you all, and now to bring this grief upon you is very distressing to me," he said, regretfully. "If it would quiet her mind or bring her any comfort to see me again, call me at any hour."

Brandon, who loved his aunt dearly, stayed all night at

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the Mt. Vernon Street house, and was in and out of the sick room, trying to be of use to Miss Louisa and to Faith, who were watching with the invalid.

Miss Adèle was alarmingly ill. She did not appear to be suffering, but she was weak and helpless, her speech faint and confused, and her mind wandering. She was living once more in the days of her youth and romance. Again and again she called for "George," and did not seem to understand why there was no reply.

With the first light of dawn, Brandon telephoned to Dovsprung. "We think it may quiet her if you come," he explained. "Of course she has confused you with him, and she calls him and is restless and unhappy because he does not come to her."

So Dovsprung returned to the little house, and did not leave it again in the three days that Miss Adèle yet lived. The guest room on the third floor was given up to him and Brandon, and they were constantly on hand, night and day, when there was anything they might do for the sick woman or for the devoted sister and niece who were nursing her. Every little while the invalid would ask for "George"; and Dovsprung would go to her bedside and sit patiently by her for a half-hour at a time many times during the day and night. At the sound of his voice, at the sight of his face, at the touch of his hand on hers, a look of great content crept into the troubled, puzzled eyes, the restlessness passed away, and the features relaxed into a peaceful smile.

Miss Louisa and Faith kept the sick woman looking very dainty and attractive, softening the effects of illness and age by the delicate fichus and laces drawn about the throat and arms and falling about the gray hair, tenderly veiling its thinness. She did not realize her condition. She scarcely recognized her nurses, but was ever grateful and courteous.

"I should like to hear you sing," she murmured at last,

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laying her feeble, white hand over that of Dovsprung. It was difficult to make out the words, so faint and uncertain was her speech.

Miss Louisa beckoned him aside. "If you could only sing to her," she sighed. "Prince Erdödy was so musical, and she used to play his accompaniments on the harp."

"But Graf von Dovsprung sings exquisitely," said Faith. "If he will sing, I will try to accompany him."

"There are several volumes of his music downstairs in the Italian cabinet," said Miss Louisa. Faith led the way to the drawing-room, and Dovsprung helped her to bring out the tastefully bound volumes of old French and Italian songs. There were duets and solos. The volumes were stamped with a princely coronet, and within was inscribed in French in a fine masculine handwriting, "To Mademoiselle Ludlow, with the respectful homage and devotion of Georges, Prince Dhaun-ap-Erdöd."

"I never before knew what the Italian cabinet contained," said Faith. "There was always a mystery about it. So we may live for years with our nearest and dearest, and never suspect the secret sorrows of their hearts."

"Here is an old, old song of Gluck's, 'Dolce mio ardor' and another exquisite old song in French by Padre Martini, 'Plaisirs d'amour.' But they require such control of voice and breath that I fear I shall not be able to sing them after my illness. Ah, here are some lovely German songs by Franz and Abt, and this from Lortzing's opera, so appropriate,

"Behüt Dich Gott! Es wär zu schön gewesen!
Behüt Dich Gott! Es hat nicht sollen sein!"

and Dovsprung sighed heavily. "God keep thee!" he murmured under his breath. "It would have been too blessed!"

Faith tuned the old harp and softly picked out the chords.

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Dovsprung hummed through the air. "It will go, I think," he said. "I shall have to take breath a little more frequently, but I can do it here, and here without spoiling that long, sweeping phrase."

He had never, when singing in the stateliest drawing-rooms of St. Petersburg, or in the Imperial palace itself, taken such pains with his performance as on this day when, hoarse and scant of breath from recent illness, he was to try his voice to please the wandering fancy of a delirious, dying old woman in the narrow rooms of this modest house in a far away democracy.

Brandon Ludlow carried the harp up the stairway and placed it at the open door of the large, rear room adjoining that of the invalid, in full sight of the bed. Dovsprung stood a little at one side, just in the shadow of the doorway, and as the first notes of the accompaniment vibrated on the air he began to sing, softly, a little hoarsely at the very first; but, as the song went on, the voice cleared and came forth in all its old mellowness and velvet smoothness, in exquisite, artistic phrasing and tender simplicity of style. The invalid's eyes closed, but a look of deepest peace and content lay on the now placid countenance. Miss Louisa, by the bedside, was vainly trying to stem the tears that gushed from her eyes at the sound of the long unheard but well-remembered strains. Brandon stood by the window and gazed into the street, winking hard and struggling with a lump in his throat.

Faith felt like one in a dream. It was amazing to her, it was unbelievable, that here, in her childhood's home, she should be at the old harp, and that this figure beside her in plain civilian dress should be the brilliant Graf von Dovsprung, the idol of St. Petersburg drawing-rooms, and that he should be singing to soothe the dying hours of poor Aunt Adèle, the personification of her lost princely lover.

When the sad pianissimo of the last phrases died away,

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two tears rolled softly down Miss Adèle's pallid cheeks. Her feeble hand was stretched out. In an instant Dovsprung was at her side. He bent down and touched his lips to the thin fingers. Then clasping the hand tenderly in both of his, he gently kissed Miss Adèle on the forehead.

"George," she murmured, "George, it was not to be, on earth, but you promised we should meet in heaven. I have been a long, long, weary time in coming, but I am here at last!" and she turned her head a little to one side and seemed to sleep.

The end came later that evening. Miss Louisa had sent for their clergyman, who read the prayers for the Visitation of the Sick with much reverence and expressiveness, and said a few kindly words to all present. Miss Adèle was beyond hearing them, and Miss Louisa seemed to have followed her sister so far in spirit as to be indifferent to earthly counsel. Dovsprung was respectfully silent and, like Miss Louisa, his mind appeared to be elsewhere. Faith was struggling against overpowering physical fatigue. Brandon alone followed the clergyman's words with reverent and grateful acceptance.

Suddenly Faith's head whirled and everything turned dark before her eyes. She groped for a chair, but a strong arm was thrown around her waist, while she felt herself being lifted off her feet and carried into her little hall bedroom, adjoining that of Aunt Adèle. She was conscious of being laid tenderly on the bed, of water sprinkled on her face, her hands being gently chafed, and she opened her eyes to see Youri Andrévich bending anxiously over her. The door into her aunt's room was ajar, that leading into the hall was wide open, and through it she could see Brandon hurriedly approaching with a glass in his hand. She tried to lift her head, but it was weak and dizzy.

"How foolish," she said impatiently. "I never did such a thing before; to think of giving way at such a moment."

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"It is not surprising," said Dovsprung, passing his arm gently under her head and shoulders and half-lifting her so that she could drink more easily. "You have been tiring yourself out for me for six weeks past, and now have been on your feet night and day for three days. I have been expecting this momentarily," and he laid her back on the pillows again and began to bathe her forehead with cologne.

"I never saw any one die before but my own mother," began Faith, tremulously.

"I wouldn't talk if I were you, just yet," advised Dovsprung. "Keep very quiet for a few minutes till the draught has taken effect."

"You must save your strength for the end," said Brandon. "Aunt Adèle may want you then. I will stand in the hall doorway and beckon you if there is any marked change. But first I must accompany Doctor Berkeley to his carriage."

Seeing that Faith's pulse was already stronger and the color coming back into her lips, Dovsprung left her side and went to the window. Faith cast a hasty glance round the room to notice if it was orderly, for certainly the last thing in the world she would have expected was that Youri Andrévich should enter it. The little room had been hers for nine years of her childhood and was daintily furnished for a child's taste with birds and flowers in chintz and wall-paper, and simply framed pictures of childhood scenes.

But she need not have worried about the appearance of the room, for the man by the window was thinking of something far different from the young girl and her surroundings.

After the clergyman's departure Brandon tiptoed upstairs. "Feeling all right again, Faithie?" he asked, glancing into the room.

"Yes, the stimulant has helped me and my head is quite steady again, but I will save my strength till it is needed, as you advised."

Brandon put on his Sunday look. "Was it not beautiful?"

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he asked in awed tones. "Didn't Doctor Berkeley read the prayers impressively?"

Neither of his hearers responded. Dovsprung was staring out of the window and Faith's sad smile was ambiguous.

Brandon tiptoed back to the hall doorway.

Dovsprung now turned and came to Faith's side again. He saw that her color was natural once more, and the strained look gone from her face. He drew a long sigh and a troubled expression came into his deep, heavily fringed eyes.

"Fidès," he asked, "is that all this man can do for her?"

"What man? All? What do you mean?"

He moved about in some agitation, though he kept his voice at a whisper so as not to disturb the watchers in the adjourning room.

"This clergyman," he explained. "Is that all he can do for a soul that is going to meet its Maker? Do you know what it seems like to us Russians, who literally die in the arms of Mother Church and are sung to sleep on her bosom? Where is the last confession, the anointing with oil of one's sinful members, the absolution, the penitential cry for mercy, the visit of the Divine Redeemer, the consolations of the holy Viaticum, the invocation of those gone before in the Communion of Saints? Oh, why must she die where all is so bare, so cold, so empty? Why does she not hear the chant of faith, and see the crucifix before her eyes? Why did I not foresee this, and sing to her of heavenly Love and Hope and Mercy?"

He glanced around the room as if looking for some familiar object. Faith knew what his eyes sought. Where was the Ikona, the sacred shrine with its burning lamp, that is in every room of every Russian home? But by the side of her bed hung an engraving of the exquisite, sad-eyed Boy-Christ of Murillo.

Facing the picture, Dovsprung knelt in the middle of the

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room and prostrated himself till his forehead touched the floor. Then, lifting his head, he signed himself reverently three times.

"Will you say the Litanies with me, Fidès?" he asked. And, bending his head, he began devoutly, "*Bogh, pomiluil Hrist, pomiluil**"

And Faith closed her eyes and tried to repeat the responses with him fervently and recollectedly. But ever before her mind was the strangeness of the thing. There had been many strange events in her short life, but none more than this, that in the heart of Puritan Boston, in the midst of this Protestant home, Youri von Dovsprung, descendant of the pagan princes of Lithuania, whom she had known in far off Russia as the brilliant courtier, the gay, unprincipled worldling, should be kneeling here, in her room, prostrated by her bedside and praying: "Christ the Redeemer, have mercy on us! Holy-Pure Mother of God, pray for us in our last agony!"

She heard Brandon's footstep softly approaching.

"She is going fast, it is the end," he whispered, holding out his hand to Faith.

She arose and went with him into the presence of Death.

Dovsprung, left alone in the little chamber, prostrated himself at full length on the floor, with arms outstretched in the form of a cross.

"They know not all they have lost, but I — I had the fulness of Thy Grace, and I rejected it!" he groaned. "Oh, pardon, Saviour! pardon Thy guilty son, and hear my poor prayer for their beloved souls!"

A few moments later he felt a touch on his shoulder. He lifted his tear-stained face and saw Fidès kneeling beside him.

"We think she is looking for you," she whispered.

He rose and followed her to the bedside and stood there

**Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison!* God have mercy! Christ have mercy!

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looking down on the countenance already stamped with the dignity of death. The restless, wandering gaze, the only thing in which there seemed life, settled on his face. Once again the look of peace filled the fading eyes. "George," murmured the feeble lips for the last time; and with her hand clasped in his Miss Adèle closed her tired eyes in the last sleep, to awake in the land where God shall wipe away all tears.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE BISHOP RELENTS

Beloved one!
No longer shall I live in this white world
Parted from thee, O thou my star of hope!
— *Russian Folk-song.*

THREE days later Miss Adèle Ludlow was buried from Trinity Church, which the sisters had attended since their residence in Boston. Bishop Ludlow came on for the funeral and sat within the chancel, in flowing robes and sleeves of lawn, while the service was read by Doctor Berkeley. Dovsprung was in the chief mourners' pew with Miss Louisa Faith and Brandon.

The edifice was well filled, for in a certain way it was a mark of predilection to have known Miss Ludlow well enough to mourn for her, and Boston society wished to show its appreciation of one of its colonial aristocracy.

Many glances were turned in curiosity on Dovsprung, and it was whispered that he was of the family of Miss Adèle's princely Austrian lover. This made her romance seem very real, and it was detailed with embellishments for nine days to come. The strikingly handsome, sad-eyed, distinguished-looking Pole or Hungarian or whatever he might be, for reports varied, attracted all eyes and many surmises. He seemed to have dropped from the skies. His name had not been heralded in the society publications. Neither Newport, nor Lenox, nor Washington knew of him. Why was he in this country? The most natural answer would be—for a wife. But surely a foreign nobleman in search of a wife would hardly seek her in so modest a

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home as that of the Misses Ludlow and their almost penniless niece. The elder Brandon girls had money, one had made an excellent match in England, and it was gathered from her insinuations that Miss Genevieve had refused at least three brilliant offers while in Europe. But Faith Brandon, with all her accomplishments, was no match for a titled foreigner. Therefore it must be supposed that he was on some mission to Miss Adèle Ludlow from the family of her former betrothed. How touchingly interesting, after all these years!

Dovsprung returned with the family from the burial at Mt. Auburn to the Ludlow home. He was to leave immediately with Brandon for New York, whence he would sail for Libau.

Miss Louisa, before mounting to her lonely room, turned to bid him farewell.

"I have no words to tell you what you have been to us," she said. "You were sent of God. Wherever you wander, may He lead you into paths of peace"; and as he stooped to kiss her hand, she laid her other hand upon his head and, bending forward, kissed him on the brow. Then she drew her heavy veil about her, and, slowly mounting the stairs, shut herself in with her sorrow.

The bishop came forward and shook Dovsprung heartily by both hands. "I never saw your uncle," he said. "I was reading for Holy Orders in England at the time of my sister's engagement. But, certainly, in your presence here at such a time we must see the guidance of the Divine Hand," and he lifted his eyes heavenward and made a vague motion in the air which might or might not have been an attempt at the sign of the Cross. He was not sure whether this gentleman, whom he understood to be of the Greek Rite, would recognize his episcopal character, and he was doubtful whether to convey his blessing after the Byzantine or the Greek manner. But apparently

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the foreign gentleman was quite unconscious of the episcopal good-will, for he held his handsome head high and smiled in a straightforward, friendly way, as one layman to another.

The two cousins had been bidding each other an affectionate good-bye, when Brandy was seized with one of his inspirations.

"Just think," he said to Dovsprung, "if my aunt had married your uncle, Faith and I would be your cousins. I know there must be some occult connection between us."

Dovsprung had turned toward Faith. He was visibly deeply moved, but she felt with a woman's unerring instinct that the solemn scenes of the last few days had changed his mood, and that the emotion he was now struggling with was a higher, more sacred one than that which had so shaken him at their last interview in this same room. She need not fear to follow the innocent promptings of her tender heart.

"Dear St. George," she whispered, "you do not wish to be my brother or my friend, but I am going to treat you like a loving cousin," and she embraced him with the same affectionate warmth she had shown to Brandon.

For a moment he was too overcome to speak. He held the innocent girl to his manly heart with deepest reverence and tenderness, and kissed her brow and cheek with such a kiss of purest affection as had not passed his lips since the days of long ago when he had a little sister to love and caress, who had loved him with enthusiastic devotion. "Fidès, little cousin," he whispered, with a half-sob, "little friend, little sister! Good-bye, dear love! Good-bye to all I most crave! God keep you, Fidès! my good angel! my ideal!"

He released her, and a heavy sigh burst from him, but he stifled it bravely.

In another moment he had left her and followed Brandon

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out into the hall and down the steps to where the automobile waited for them.

"Faith," said the bishop, "I should like to understand just what that man's position is."

"His position?" faltered Faith. "Do you mean toward me?"

"Er — well, of course I wish to inquire into that, also. It seems rather unusual. But I meant more particularly just now to inquire into his position ecclesiastically. I think he said he was a Catholic, but a Greek and not a Romanist."

"He is a Catholic of the Greco-Slavonic Rite in union with Rome," explained Faith. "He received the sacraments at the hospital from one of the Jesuit Fathers."

"Well, well! I am sorry for that! I hoped that he would feel he was one of us! I should have been glad to visit him at the hospital, if I had known. I thought that he seemed rather impressed by our burial service. Everything was conducted with much dignity, and Mr. Prang's selections on the organ seemed to be in the best of taste. All the representative people of Boston were present. It was very gratifying."

Faith was silent. Her uncle had been in Russia many weeks; could it be that he had never heard the solemn memorial liturgy and the wonderful music of the Slavonic Rites, the most beautiful, the most religious music the world has known? Had he never seen the praying, the worshiping multitudes, the magnificent ceremonial, the mystery of adoration, the heart-rending lament of penance, the cry for peace and mercy, that mark the ancient liturgies of Chrysostom, and Basil, and Gregory?*

*There are three distinct liturgies in use in the Russian Church, two translated into the Old-Slavonic from the Greek, and one from the Latin. The liturgy of St. Basil is used ten times during the ecclesiastical year. That of St. Gregory, Pope of Rome, called the "Mass of the Pre-Sanctified," is used sixteen times, in Lent. On other days the liturgy used is that of St. John Chrysostom.

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Andrévich had been impressed by the service he had seen that morning, but not as the good bishop wished, — impressed rather by what it lacked than what it presented!

"And now, Faith," resumed the bishop, in business-like tones, "I think it is time we discussed the other situation. What are your relations to this man? Are you engaged to him? Have you given up the other man with whom you were so infatuated a year ago? I must say that if you are obstinately bent on marrying a Russian in any case, I should much prefer the Orthodox to the Romanist. Nay, that is hardly strong enough. I might consent to your belonging to the Orthodox Branch of the Catholic Church, but never, never would I permit you to embrace the Roman Schism!"

"I have not given up the other man," said Faith, earnestly. "Graf von Dovsprung is a life-long friend of Prince Solntsoff and his sister, and he has been like a brother to them and to me."

"A pretty friend," echoed the bishop. "It looks very friendly indeed to be making love to you behind the other man's back."

Faith shook her head sadly. "Do not misunderstand him. He is not making love to me," she explained unwillingly. "He once asked me to marry him, but that was long ago, in Russia. He knows now how much I care for Lyóva, and he would rather cut off his hand than be false to his friend. I embraced him as I would a dear brother before you all; but I could not have done so had I not been sure of his honor and loyalty."

The bishop looked unconvinced. "I am glad he is gone. You were in great danger," he said. "You, who have no knowledge of men, may think him like a brother; but I say that a man of his age and physique and temperament does not love a young and attractive woman like a sister. If you wish to keep faith with Prince Solntsoff, beware of this man who calls himself his friend and your brother. He

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is the clever and determined sort of man that women cannot resist. He will win you in the end. Beware! I know the type!"

Faith colored and looked distressed, but there was no use trying to explain further. She could only take comfort in the fact that her uncle had referred to her marriage with Lyéff Petróvich as to something within the realm of possibility. That was already a great concession. Now that his heart was soft she would plead with him.

But at that moment a message came from Miss Louisa, desiring the bishop to speak with her in her room.

He went up almost timidly. He was a man of strong family feeling and he believed himself deeply attached to his sisters, but as a matter of fact he had very slight acquaintance with them. They had always weighed a little on his mind. It made him feel uncomfortable that he and his wife and children should be living in a certain luxury and ease, while his sisters were so straitened in their circumstances and obliged to support themselves by their accomplishments. At one time he had even thought of offering them a small yearly allowance but had been discouraged from this by his wife, who considered it a foolish idea. The Misses Ludlow really needed nothing more. As for being obliged to support themselves, why, they had nothing else to do, and their classes gave them something to think of beside their own health, and were, in fact, a pleasant social relaxation. They had a great deal to be thankful for, with a house of their own and an assured income. Very few unmarried women were so well placed in this world.

The bishop had learned to look at it with his wife's eyes, yet he went to his sister with a certain timidity. What if Louisa should say that she could not keep up her classes alone, and should appeal to him to do something for her? It would be very awkward to refuse; but with his large and expensive family and the cares of a diocese —

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His sister stood at her door to receive him, in all the gentle dignity of her sorrow. He kissed her quite tenderly and found himself wondering how any one could talk of money to her, and in what impersonal manner the pupils paid for their lessons. He recovered himself with a start, and began to say something appropriate to the occasion about resignation under the chastening Hand, but Miss Louisa interrupted him.

"It is not of myself, or of our common sorrow, that I wish to speak," she said, "but of Faith. She has been an honorable and conscientious child and has kept with scrupulous fidelity her promise not to mention her affairs to us. It is only through Rupert's letters to my sister Adèle that we know of her unhappiness. By the grief we share in the loss of that dear sister, the heart-broken woman whom we have laid in her grave this day, I appeal to you, my brother, to withdraw your opposition to Faith's marriage."

"Oh, ah, I — er," began the bishop. "My dear Louisa, I have nothing to do with her marrying or not marrying. Let her marry whom she pleases, so long as she does not marry out of the Church while she is under my guardianship."

"Wilfred," said his sister solemnly, "remember that Adèle's broken life is at your door! My own sorrow I alone am answerable for. It was my own pride and my poverty that made me withdraw from a match that had been arranged in days when my father could have given me a suitable dowry. With Adèle, it was otherwise."

"Erdödy jilted her!" declared the bishop, bluntly.

"No, Wilfred! It was your vehement opposition that forced him to withdraw," said his sister, firmly. "Adèle could have married him and have remained in her Protestant faith and not sacrificed one of her religious beliefs. She was satisfied to be married by his clergyman and had freely consented to this, when you interfered and demanded

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that he should sacrifice points that would mean cutting himself off from the religion of his family, of his ancestors and of his country. Do not now ruin Faith's young life. Leave her heart and her conscience free to choose between the two men who love her, the Orthodox and the Catholic."

"'Roman' Catholic," corrected the bishop.

"It is the same. In your heart you know it is," said Miss Louisa with considerable spirit, though without losing her gentle gravity of manner. "If I believed, as you profess to believe, that it is necessary to be a Catholic, it is to Rome I should go, as the head and centre of the Universal Church, and not to any *national* organization. But I am a Protestant. I have been brought up to glory in Protestantism. The Episcopal Church, the Episcopal liturgy, are mere forms of Church government and public worship, they do not alter the fundamental principle of Protestantism."

If Miss Louisa had put on mitre and chasuble and ascended the pulpit of St. Paul's cathedral her brother could not have been more dumbfounded than at this declaration. He paced the narrow room in the utmost agitation.

"Good heavens!" he groaned. "Louisa! Louisa! let me beg of you! Don't let Faith hear any such opinions from you! She is half way to Rome already! This man that has turned up, this nephew of Erdödy's, is moving heaven and earth to win her, and he will succeed. He is just the daring, conquering sort of fellow that will sweep her off her feet some day. It is plain to be seen that she has a tender leaning toward him already. For heaven's sake, don't encourage her with any such balderdash as you have been talking to me. Excuse me, Louisa! At such a moment I should be nicer in my use of language toward you, but this cuts deep! I will let her marry Solntsoff to-morrow if it will save her from this other man's jesuitical influence. The Russian schism is a lesser evil than Rome!"

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"I appreciate that the situation is a difficult one for you, Wilfred," said his sister, kindly. "Let me suggest to you that you resign your spiritual guardianship of Faith, and leave the responsibility of her marriage and all it may entail to her father and her brother. No one can hold you accountable if they consent. You know Charles Brandon will do so the moment your opposition is withdrawn. I, of course, cannot live alone in this house with all its sad associations ——"

The bishop began to feel shaky. What was she going to propose?

"I shall sell it as soon as may be. The proceeds of the sale together with the income I already enjoy will enable me to revisit the scenes of my childhood and end my days in one of the smaller German or Italian cities, where I shall settle in a little apartment with a maid. Faith will take me over. We will visit Rupert and she can be married from his house. He already intends to give Faith the six thousand pounds that their mother brought to his father, since he and his children are amply provided for by Lord Solway. Even if the marriage never takes place, she will thus be, in a measure, independent and can make her home with me if she desires."

The bishop was greatly relieved. This was certainly an excellent plan. It disposed at once of two great difficulties, his sister's future and the danger of his niece's going over to Rome. He acquiesced heartily in Miss Louisa's idea and lost no time in carrying it out. Charles Brandon and Rupert Milbanke must look after their own daughter and sister. He could not be burdened longer with other people's children. He had his own family and the cares of his diocese.

He sent for Faith and had a long interview with her that evening. He went at some length into a statement of his weighty episcopal duties, the absorbing anxiety of his own growing family, the advisability of Faith's accompany-

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ing her Aunt Louisa to Europe, the difficulties of his exercising his guardianship over her when separated by the ocean, and finally worked up to the question of resigning this responsibility.

"If your father should see fit to remove my restrictions and allow your marriage to Solntsoff to take place," he declared, "let him be accountable for the decision. I shall wash my hands of the affair."

"Oh," cried Faith, joyously, "then consider your hands as good as washed already, for, as soon as your opposition is withdrawn, Father will give in at once. You have been his backbone."

Now the bishop prided himself on having in abundance those qualities of firmness, determination and energy familiarly known as "backbone." He had enough for his own needs and to spare for those who lacked, among whom he numbered his brother-in-law. Therefore he smiled benignantly at Faith's allusion. She was a very intelligent child. What a pity it was she had been perverted by her foreign lover. She would have made an excellent wife for a brilliant young clergyman, or for a rising young diplomat with High Church views and a missionary spirit. It was too bad! Too bad!

Undoubtedly the daughter and the brother-in-law had taken the measure of Mr. Brandon's character, for in the temporary absence of his daughter Genevieve, and deprived of the bishop's support, he gave way little by little. He told Faith that he had never had any wish to oppose her, that he had only tried to do his duty by her as others seemed to see it for him. He believed that she should wait out the year that Prince Solntsoff had agreed to, but he asked nothing further. Anything more would be persecution. She should then be free to worship her Maker in the way she loved best, and she should be free to marry and live with the man she loved best.

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"As for living in his country," he went on, "I have roved about so much and visited so many out of the way places in my scientific researches, and have found so much unexpected goodness and attractiveness in the most unpromising spots, that I am not afraid but that you may be very happy in a country so richly endowed as Russia. As for the man you wish to marry, the ideal American gentleman I would have chosen for you could not be a more democratic, hard-working, useful citizen than this Russian who, by some strange anomaly, was born an aristocrat and bred at the court of an Autocrat. You have been a dutiful and obedient child. Continue to fulfill the conditions of your test honorably till the year is out, and on your nineteenth birthday I will write him that all restrictions are removed. If he, too, has stood the test, then you will have the reward most precious to a good woman — a faithful, Christian husband."

Then he cried a little, and Faith cried, too: and he whispered to her, with a sudden stiffening of his spinal consistency, that her uncle, the bishop, had been a meddlesome bag of wind! At that they both laughed and grew cheerful again!

The clouds had lifted. The days sped on. Summer came and went, bringing with it the peace that Dovsprung had so dreaded. Brandon had received a grateful letter from him refunding the sums borrowed, and Miss Ludlow had also had a courteous note, thanking her for her hospitality but giving no news of his own affairs.

Fate seemed to smile on Miss Ludlow's plans. Late in the summer the house found a purchaser. Faith worked hard superintending its dismantling, the sorting and packing of the furniture and many smaller possessions, and six months after Miss Adèle's death and funeral and Dovsprung's departure, she and her Aunt Louisa sailed from New York to Southampton.

Faith was weary almost to the limit of her endurance

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when the task was over. Everything had come upon her unassisted, for Miss Louisa was not strong and was greatly broken by the severing of the last tie that bound her to her home and family. Faith must decide every question, must manage all the business affairs, must attend to all the practical details, must keep up her aunt's courage. There was no one to turn to for counsel or help.

Little wonder that, busy and tired, overwhelmed in mind and body, questions of theology did not press upon her. When she reached London her test would be over, she would be free to investigate, free to study the proposition,—fast growing to a conviction,—that union with the See of Peter was an essential duty; she would have time to pray and to think. But one point was clear to her. She must not marry Lyóva and, as his wife, become subject to the rigid laws of the Russian State Church while this doubt lay on her mind. Until it was solved, one way or another, she must retain her freedom of conscience. God help them both in this new trial!

Then, just before they sailed, came the Constitutional Proclamation of late October assuring, among other liberties, that of religious freedom to the Russian people. Faith's heart rejoiced with exceeding great joy. Surely the last remaining shadow between Lyóva and herself was now dispelled! Now there would be no difficulty, there need be no separation. Even as a Russian, even as Lyóva's Orthodox wife, she would be free. No religious scruple need longer hold her back from her happiness.

There had been time to exchange communications with Rupert, now transferred to a post in the Foreign Office in London, and a few days before they started, Mr. Brandon showed to Faith a formal letter which he had composed to Prince Solntsoff. It told him that all restrictions had now been removed from Faith's freedom of action and that she was to accompany her aunt to London. It expressed good

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will toward the prince and the hope that, whether they renewed their engagement or not, which now depended entirely upon themselves, he and Faith would decide for their own best individual happiness.

Faith made eager calculations. If Lyéff Petróvich were in St. Petersburg it was just possible that a reply might meet her in London, or soon after her arrival there. Oh, the joy of being in touch with him again! He would long since have had Dovsprung's letter, and know of her truth and fidelity; but he would not dream of this present happiness.

The voyage was stormy, and Miss Ludlow was distressingly ill, her heart being much affected. Faith had anxious days and nights, and was greatly relieved when the ship drew into the shelter and quiet of the English harbor.

It was cold and there was a drizzling rain as Faith and her aunt, standing on the gangplank, saw, among the many waiting figures, Rupert Milbanke, slim, brown, well-groomed, with monocle in eye; her sister Sophy with Mr. Trevor, and her friends, Baron and Baroness Stourdza. They exchanged enthusiastic signals of greeting with Faith. She gathered up their smaller belongings, a man having pushed his way toward her to relieve her of heavy rug and suitcase, and she carefully piloted Miss Ludlow down the crowded gangplank and then hurried forward to embrace her stepbrother and sister and waiting friends. Rupert's likeness to his Aunt Adèle was striking and deeply affected Miss Louisa, who had not seen him in many years.

"And, oh, Rupert," said Faith, when the first pathetic greetings were well over, "did you notice whether any mail had come for me before you left London?"

"Yes, a large one," replied Rupert, with a twinkle in the eye that was at liberty.

"Did you notice whether it was from Russia?" excitedly.

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"All of it was from Russia," answered the grinning brother.

"Oh, I wish you had brought it with you!"

"I did! It is here!" he announced, genially.

With an exclamation of delight Faith made a dive for his overcoat pocket.

"Oh, pshaw! It was too big for my pocket," he said, pulling away from her. "It was big enough to stand alone and come by itself. It is behind you now!"

Faith grew white and trembling. Turning slowly, she looked behind her. There, with her rug on his arm and her suitcase at his feet, stood a tall, fair man in a long gray raincoat, his soft felt hat pulled well down over his laughing, light-blue eyes. In an instant his hat was off, his arms were around her, and Faith, with her head against his breast, heard the heavy throbbing of the constant heart of Lyéff Petróvich!

CHAPTER XXVII

THE DELAYED LETTER

"If the woe in which I live
Ever reach thy generous ear,
Pity not, but, oh, forgive
Thy devoted worshiper!

"Yet could I subdue my pain,
Soothe affection's rankling smart
Ne'er would I resume again
The lost empire of my heart.

"Thou my love, art sovereign there!
There thou hast a living shrine —
Let my portion be despair
If the light of bliss be thine."

— *N. A. Meletski.*

"FAITH! You will not keep me waiting?"

"Not if you will take me just as I am."

"Did I not tell you that I should be content with you in sackcloth? but it need not be as bad as that! I took my chances, Faith! I brought with me the historical Russian bridal costume and headdress, worn by my mother and my sister at their weddings. How often I have pictured you in it! You will wear it, will you not?"

"You were very sure of me! Yes, it will be sweet to wear what is so full of tender associations. The rest of my wardrobe is black on account of having been so long in mourning, and there is little enough at best, but," smiling affectionately at him, "I shall not disappoint you for the sake of a few furbelows."

"Alas! Mourning is only too appropriate for Russia now," he said, drawing her close to his side. "Faith, this is Saturday. I must be at home by next Thursday evening.

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It is fifty hours of steady travel. I shall have to leave Tuesday afternoon. I wish —" he hesitated. "Is it too much?"

She looked up with crimson cheeks. "You wish that we might be married to-morrow?" she asked bravely.

He kissed her passionately. Who could help it?

"We could then have two days together at Cologne or Berlin — a poor apology for a bridal trip; but you are marrying a man who is sad at heart about his country's troubles and eager to get back to his work. We must put off our honeymoon till brighter days," he sighed.

"What can be better than a honeymoon in our own home?" she said, tenderly.

"Such a small home, but all ours, and so long waited for! And dear old Avdótia Ilínichna will be with us for a while, till you learn the mysteries of Russian housekeeping. Now," he added, energetically, "if you have any shopping to do, I will give you up for the day. Meanwhile I shall go to the Imperial Embassy to take out the legal papers and arrange with Father Uspenski for the religious ceremonies. In the evening we will both go to confession, and receive the sacrament together in the morning. After the marriage ceremony you will have the afternoon to pack and rest, and we will take the evening train for Dover."

Unexpected delays arose. There were legal and religious requirements to be met on both sides, and it was found impossible to have the marriage before Tuesday. Solntsoff chafed at the delay. He had counted on the two holidays together; but now they must start immediately after the ceremonies of the morning and the formal wedding breakfast, which Rupert insisted upon, attended only by the American and Russian Embassies, the Trevors and the Stourdzas. Then would come the unbroken journey of fifty hours of fatiguing travel, in the publicity of a train — a most unromantic and trying culmination of their long courtship.

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While Solntsoff was seeing to the legal arrangements, Rupert hung round Faith, as she took stock of her slender wardrobe.

"So, I shall not have you, after all," he complained. "What are the boys going to do, Faith? I am in a desperate plight. If the children are with me, I have to leave them with irresponsible governesses and tutors and they are spoiled. Yet if I let them stay with Amy's parents I get so horribly lonely. Those few months you were with us were so sweet. I think I shall have to adopt an aunt or a sister for them."

"That would have its dangers, too," observed Faith, shrewdly.

Rupert blushed. Faith saw the blush and laughed slyly.

"You might as well tell me who it is at once," she said.

"Now, how did you know?" he exclaimed in surprise.

"Confess! Confess!" she cried, merrily.

"You see, Faith dear," began Rupert, with a timidity and hesitation quite unexpected in a British diplomat. "I do not think I could ever love a very young woman again. Amy had a place in my heart that I do not care to have filled. I wish to keep the memory of her sweet youth and freshness as something sacred and apart. If I — if I ever marry, it would be some one near my present age, some one whom I am attracted to by entirely different qualities, a — a widow, for instance."

"Yes," agreed Faith. "Then you would be quits."

"And, you see," he continued, "if she had, say, two children, I could notice how she brings them up and judge if she would be a good mother for my boys."

"Would they be boys, too?" inquired Faith, with interest.

"Perhaps one boy and one girl would be better," suggested Rupert. "My boys are of the tender age when they sadly need a mother's care. Her boy would be rapidly nearing an age when he needs a father's guidance. Her sweet young

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daughter would make a kind elder sister and merry playmate to Robbie and Edgar. It seems distinctly a waste to have two households, where they might so advantageously be amalgamated into one. Don't you agree with me?"

"The question is, rather, does *she* agree with you," observed Faith, demurely.

"That's the mischief! How am I to know if I don't ask, and how the deuce can I get up the courage to ask? Faith, when I think of the assurance with which I courted Amy, I am fairly aghast! How did I ever dare? I cannot remember that I had any of the flutterings and embarrassments that make a fool of me now. Yet it ought to be the other way. I have been a married man, she has been a married woman, we are experienced, settled, sensible persons in our prime. You would fancy it all a very matter-of-fact affair, yet my knees fairly knock together when I think of offering myself to that gracious, kindly, charming woman!"

"I can understand it perfectly," said Faith, sympathetically, slipping her hand affectionately into her brother's. "You were over head and ears in love with Amy, you had the hope and the daring of youth and inexperience. Love would be everything! Now you have had a long, hard experience of life, and you realize the gravity of its problems. You reason too much about it. You do not trust enough to affection and congenial companionship to smooth over things. You know that your burdens will be halved, if she shares them; but you feel as if you were asking her to double hers. Yet perhaps she, too, is feeling as if hers would be halved if you share them. Have you not given her reason to suspect your attachment?"

"I have given her all sorts of reasons but the right one! I have explained to her, with the utmost care and elaboration of detail, the why and the wherefore of my long correspondence with her and of my visits to St. Petersburg ——"

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"St. Petersburg! Aha!" thought Faith, and a light broke in upon her.

"It was always on your account that I corresponded with her, so that I might keep in touch with Solntsoff and let you have news of him. I went on to St. Petersburg when he was released from the fortress, wholly and entirely, as I assured her, to consult with him about you. When she took her uncle to Nauheim in the following autumn for the baths, I — er — was recommended the treatment by my physician. Lord! but I loathed those baths, yet I took one religiously every day, and entertained her with a description of my symptoms."

"You went to the right spot," cried Faith, gayly. "Those baths are prescribed for irregular action of the heart!"

"Then at Easter I took the boys to St. Petersburg with me. I thought she would fall in love with them and want to be a mother to them. But as I had told her that I brought them to see the sights, I had to drag those innocent babes to churches and museums till they were worn out, bored to death, and cross as two sticks. They acted like little devils incarnate every time she saw them."

"And she probably took pity on their helpless father, and her maternal heart yearned over the maltreated young ones," laughed Faith. "I dare say it was the best thing that could have happened."

"You give me a ray of hope," sighed Rupert. "She probably suspects by this time what a consummate ass I am, and she may come to our rescue from sheer pity. I am going to write her a note and confess all. You shall give it to her and tell her we are not as bad as we seem."

And Faith promised to be his earnest advocate.

She had little time to recover from her fatigue in the rush of the next three days. There was so much to be done, so many people to see, she had the bewildered feeling of one walking through a dream. But at last the long ceremony

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was over. The guests were beginning to disperse after the joyous wedding breakfast; and Faith, who had started every time she heard herself addressed as "Princess" and "Siyátelstvo," slipped away from the friendly circle to the morning-room upstairs to have a last word with her aunt and brother before changing into her traveling dress. Miss Louisa kissed her with murmured words of blessing and prayer. Then she handed her a small box.

"After his return to Russia, Count von Dovsprung sent this to me to be given you in case of your marriage," she explained.

Faith turned very white and felt a little faint. She was somewhat nervous from the excitement, emotion and fatigue of the last few days and felt that she was on the verge of tears. She sat down quickly, then held out her hand to receive the box. Rupert discreetly turned his back, but her aunt was bending over her and she could see Lyóva's eyes fastened on her. She felt a little hysterical and would have given a good deal to be alone for a few moments.

She opened the box mechanically. Within lay an exquisite Burmese ruby of choicest color and unusual size, set in a brooch of diamonds and pearls, on the inner side of which was engraved simply, "To Fidès."

With it was a little note, a few words in French:

"To her 'whose price is above rubies, in whom the heart of her husband may safely trust,' to her who has twice saved me from death,—from the death of the soul and that of the body, I send this token of my undying love and veneration. May she pray in life and death for her heart-broken

"YOURS."

With one little cry of pity and pain, Faith thrust the jewel and the note into her husband's hands. Then the tears came in a wild flood, and she sobbed uncontrollably.

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They laid her down on the sofa, removed her heavy head-dress and bridal crown and brought her salts and a stimulant. When her sobs began to subside her husband asked to be left alone with her, and the others withdrew from the room.

Then, for the first time, he read the note, and he sat by her side as if turned to stone.

"I do not understand," he said at length, hoarsely. "Faith, what does it mean? When did Dovsprung meet your aunt? When did you save his life? What are you keeping from me?"

Faith sat up and, controlling her sobs, began to dry her eyes.

"Keeping from you!" she exclaimed, a little angrily at first, but she recollected that he might well be pained and distressed by her unfortunate tears, so she softened her voice.

"His letter to you explained everything," she said.

"His letter? I never received any letter from Youri Andrévich."

"Never received it?" she echoed. She was still weak and trembling, and there was something pitiful and appealing in her expression and her efforts at self-control. "He wrote from his sick-bed at the hospital, to tell you — how it was with me. He thought you ought to know."

The man by her side looked amazed and stupefied.

"What hospital? Where? Faith, try to realize that I know absolutely nothing of what you refer to! What was it he thought he should tell me?"

She was so exhausted it was hard for her to find words.

"He wanted you to know — how much it was costing me — what I was suffering — for my fidelity to you. He behaved so nobly. He would not have come at all — to see me — had he not thought himself dying. Oh, Lyóva," with a fresh burst of sobs, "I ought not to cry — on my

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wedding-day, but I am so tired, so tired! If I could have half an hour — to rest quietly — I should be all right again; but I — I hardly know what I am saying. Aunt Louisa will tell you — about the hospital and Aunt Adèle — and everything. I am — so — tired!”

He laid her back among the cushions and gazing down at her forgot his own distress at the sight of hers. He knelt by her side.

“Rest quietly, poor child!” he murmured. “I will leave you to yourself for a while. Vyéra, it was God’s will that I should not get that letter, that I should not understand. I know that whatever happened you tried to be true to me, that you always will be true to me. It is not your fault if you could not master your heart. Rest quietly, my — my darling!”

His voice broke a little. He placed the note and the ruby brooch by her side, and left her to have her cry out by herself. He had never before known her so excitable, so uncontrolled, — his reasonable, sensible little Vyéra. Nor did he recognize himself. His life was apparently ruined on his wedding-day, and yet he seemed to take it calmly and be able to face the future. He was amazed at his own calmness. He had fancied that jealousy would make a brute of him, but he felt only a dumb, stupid pain. It seemed to him as if he could never again feel anything so strongly as on that day when he had fainted on seeing her go to Dovsprung’s side. That had been his death-blow, though only a premonition of what was now a reality.

He wondered vaguely whether a marriage could be annulled when the vows had been made in ignorance of conditions which, if known, would have prevented its taking place. Certainly he did not wish Vyéra to marry him if her poor little heart was yearning for another man. Had he only known, he would have released her from her engagement at the very steps of the altar.

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He sent a message by a servant that he would like to see Father Uspenski, in his room, as soon as possible. The train would leave in two hours, and he must start on his wedding-trip alone. He laughed grimly. His wife, who was perhaps not his wife, was evidently too ill to travel. He must return alone!

But first he would see Miss Ludlow. Sympathetically and gently she told him what she knew of Dovsprung's escape and wanderings, of his coming to the Boston hospital, his being recalled from the dead, as it were, by the sound of Faith's voice, her long nursing of him with Brandon's aid, his coming to the Ludlow home, his extraordinary resemblance to his uncle, and Miss Adèle's happy death in his arms. Of the letter she of course knew nothing, but she could tell Solntsoff truly that Faith had never swerved in her loyalty to him

"Count von Dovsprung did not ask for her love, but it was plain he was at her feet, and she had only to hold out her hand," said Miss Ludlow. "But she seemed to feel herself irrevocably yours. I never saw an instant's hesitation on her part. You must not be alarmed by her momentary agitation, dear prince. Think what the child has been through in the way of trial, grief and suspense for months past, and the fatigues and excitements of the few last weeks and days! She is tired and overwrought, but she must never be separated from you again. Her life is now bound up in yours." And she withdrew to give directions about Faith's luggage.

He listened stonily. He knew Faith, knew that her sense of loyalty to him would be so great that not even to her dear aunt would she confide her anguish. But he,— he had heard her broken words, he had seen her struggle, her passionate grief. "He wrote to tell you how it was with me, what it was costing me to be faithful."

And they supposed that he had received the letter. He flushed hotly as he recalled that he had not as much as asked

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Faith if she wished to renew her engagement, but had taken it for granted that she would marry him. What a blundering fellow he had been! Had not her father's letter expressly said, "whether they renewed their engagement or not," he hoped they would decide for the individual interest and happiness of each. For the first time it struck him that Mr. Brandon's letter hinted of a doubt. Blundering and blind he had been! What must they have thought of him? Instead of offering her freedom, or pleading to be allowed to try and win back her love, he had rushed to claim her and had whirled her off her feet into this hasty marriage. She, of course, would make no complaint. Her sense of honor was so high that she would keep her faith with him at any price. She would not dream of asking for her freedom.

Here something within him rebelled fiercely. She was his Vyéra, his Little Comrade, who would deal truly and frankly with him under all circumstances, for so it had been agreed between them! They were to "talk it over," as dear friends; she was to feel free to love another if she wished; but they would always speak the truth to each other, having confidence in the other's courage and good sense. They would hurt each other rather than marry for pity, or for duty's sake, or for any other reason than constant love!

Lyéff Petróvich sank on his knees. "God willed it," he said, with a dry sob. "I was blind and without understanding; yet, perhaps, was my blindness not blindness, but a truly justifiable and justified faith.

"For she had made her confession," he thought. "She had made a special confession of her whole life, on the eve of her marriage, in preparation for the sacrament of matrimony. Had there been a doubt in her mind, had there been a yearning toward any other man than her future husband she would have told all, and her confessor would have prevented her from sacrificing the happiness of three lives to a mistaken sense of duty. Father Uspenski is an experienced

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and a prudent man. He understands the moral dangers there would be in such a union, and he understands me. He knows my jealous, ugly temper and that I should be unhappy with the sweetest saint on earth, had I not confidence that I possessed her supreme affection. He would have directed her wisely in the interests of both.

"And she came from her confession last evening looking so happy, so free from doubts and fears, so radiant with purity and peace! She came to me at the altar this morning with the blessing of God and the sanction of His priest. I will trust her against the evidence of her own distracted words. I will — have — faith!"

He rose slowly from his knees and looked at his watch. It was now an hour since he had left her. He would go to her and see if she were rested, to comfort her as best he could.

As he turned toward the door it opened, and Faith stood there in her traveling dress, black, since she had nothing else to wear, but relieved by a touch of color in hat and blouse. She came straight to him in all her noble young grace of bearing, her eyes shining with tenderness and truth and confidence. She raised her arms and clasped her hands about his neck.

"Lyóva," she whispered. "You must forget my silly tears. I am rested now and I came to find you. I have not yet called you — 'my husband!'" and she lifted her face to his.

He looked earnestly down into the sweet face, now so composed, and into the honest eyes. Her presence restored his calm. She was herself again, his Vyéra, his Little Comrade, who would under all circumstances deal truthfully and frankly with her Big Friend, who would not make vows with a lie in her heart. He clasped his arms about her and pressed his lips to hers.

"My wife!" he murmured.

"And do you feel fit for the long journey?" he asked

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anxiously, after a moment. "You are so tired, and heaven only knows what lies before us at the other end."

"I certainly shall not let you go without me," she said, with decision. "You must take me in sickness or in health. You cannot help yourself now! And, Lyóva," caressingly, "there is just one thing I do not feel fit for. I am ready to face fatigue or sickness or bombs or revolution or prison or exile with you, but I do not feel fit to face another separation."

At this instant came a knock at the door. "Father Uspenski to see your Grace," announced the English footman.

The prince started. He grew a little red as he recalled that he had sent for the chaplain to consult with him about the possibility of annulling their marriage!

"*Bátyushka*, Little Father," he said smiling, to the priest, "the difficulty I thought to consult you about has been cleared up. There is nothing now but to crave your blessing and ask you to pray with us for a safe journey and a happy home-coming." He took Faith's hand and the three knelt together to say the itinerary prayers.

When the prayers were over and the chaplain had again blessed them, there was a scant half hour for their preparations. The prince was once more confident and happy, but there was much haste, hurried adieux and a few little annoyances before they were safely started for their journey. It was a short run to Dover. Then came a stormy five hours' passage to Ostend, until they were finally settled on the *train de luxe* which they were not to leave again for forty-five hours. How good-naturedly Faith took all the little misadventures! What a cheery, sensible traveling companion she made!

"You have married a matter-of-fact man and must plunge with a vengeance into a matter-of-fact life," he said, laughingly, as he did his best to dispose her comfortably in

the compartment, settling her with pillows and loading her down with illustrated papers, a couple of novels, flowers, a basket of fruit and a box of bonbons.

She smiled tenderly up into his face. "After all we have been through it seems wonderful enough that our marriage is a matter-of-fact at all! Do you know, Lyóva," she added, a little wistfully, "I was not sure till the day we sailed that it could really be! I had a doubt, a scruple, that I feared might be an obstacle ——"

Her husband grew white and gripped hold of the door-frame, staring dumbly at her. What scruple, what obstacle to their marriage could she mean, but one of the heart?

The entrance of the guard put an end to her confidences, and when the man had left, the question that Solntsoff would have asked froze upon his lips. The interruption had apparently driven the matter from Faith's mind, and she lay back contentedly on the pillows.

Slowly he gathered up his notebook and an armful of newspapers, and left her to rest. He had taken a berth in the adjoining section, so she had the large, roomy compartment quietly to herself through the journey except for the few hours that he spent with her off and on during the day, when she saw that he seemed absent-minded and was much absorbed with newspapers, despatches and his own writing.

From time to time, however, he would come to her side and talk to her, or read aloud to her, when the noise of the train permitted. She noticed that he did not speak about themselves. Nor did she resume her interrupted confidence. She had already spoiled their wedding-day with her unfortunate tears; she would not further spoil it by distressing him with her religious doubts. His heart was full of the troubles of his beloved fatherland, so their talk was mostly of Russia, her past sorrows, her threatening future, the strikes that had broken out on every hand,

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the incipient revolution, the great changes that would be wrought by the new constitution.

At the Polish frontier they found the country already in the throes of the great railroad and telegraph strike. There was a delay of some hours, as the only train running through to St. Petersburg was the heavily guarded military train to which theirs would be coupled. There were Russian soldiers everywhere, good-natured, yellow-haired, broad-backed fellows, and courteous, kindly officers. Faith felt very safe. It seemed to be a curious kind of revolution that was on foot. With the exception of a few clever, fiery leaders, assisted by a handful from the criminal element of the country, the combatants seemed so devoid of ill-will, the peasants so cheery and submissive, the soldiery so genial and friendly to the prisoners, so tender of the wounded. Faith could not believe that the movement would amount to anything, if once a few of the leaders were caught.

When darkness came on the second evening, a dull, red glow kindled on the northeastern horizon. As the train sped toward it the conflagration grew in extent, and fierce flames could be distinctly discerned. The air became dense with smoke and the smell of burning wood. The train slowed down, then halted for a few moments. Faith and her husband stepped out on the platform to watch the scene. It was the great factory L —, with its outlying workingmen's barracks, suffering destruction at incendiary hands. There were soldiers on the scene, and all rioting had apparently been quelled.

They took their seats again and the train sped on. The crimson pageant now lay to the south and would soon fade on the westerly horizon.

A polite, cheery subaltern officer came to the door of their compartment and saluted Faith.

"*Vashe Siyátelstvo! Pozvólte!* Your Splendor, permit me to assure you from the commanding officer that there is

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no cause for anxiety. We have a strong guard, and a pilot engine is running ahead of the train. Have no anxiety!"

Solntsoff returned the salutation genially. "We are greatly obliged for the reassurance, *golubchik*.* Kindly give our greetings to the officer in charge."

"Yes, yes," assented the sergeant. "These are bad days to bring the bride home, *Bátyushka*, but the sun is behind the clouds. They will pass."

Solntsoff looked up in surprise. How should they know him or know that he was bringing his bride home?

"What is the family name of the commanding officer?" he asked.

"Pritwitz, Lieutenant Baron Andréi Nikítich, permit me."

"I have not the honor of knowing him, but I am much indebted for his message of reassurance to Princess Solntsova."

"Ah, yes, yes! Now then, the whole district is under martial law, and the military governor of the province has been all day at the scene of the fire. Everything is quiet again, but the fire must burn itself out. His High Excellency is now with our train."

"Ah! I should like to pay my respects to the governor. Will you announce me? Which coach is his High Excellency traveling in?"

"Coach! No, no!" cried the sergeant, disdainfully. "Oh, no! He is not in any coach. Where should he be? The Little Father is with his children where the danger is — riding on the pilot-engine!"

"To be sure, we are in Russia!" smiled the prince. "And the Little Father? What is his High Excellency's name?"

"Von Dovsprung-Zaozérski, General Youri Andrévich, to command!" answered the sergeant; and saluting, he retired.

It was very still in the little compartment. Solntsoff

**Golubchik*, i. e. pigeon; *Bátyushka*, little father; familiar term used between an older and a younger person, or a superior and an inferior.

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glanced toward Faith. She had turned her face away and he fancied he heard a faint sigh. He felt again that dull, benumbing pain that had crept over him on his wedding-day. He shivered, and taking up his papers tried to forget himself in work.

A delegation of Alyónkins, Shumároffs and Kliázemskis met them at the station and escorted them joyously to the old prince's palace. After they had embraced Natália Petróvna and knelt to receive their uncle's blessing and embrace, there was a merry little supper. All was genial and no allusions made to the late war or to the threatened Reign of Terror; yet Faith missed two well-known faces, those of the young officers, Nikita Ryapoloff and Seriózha Milítsyn, while Solntsoff knew that Alyónkin's country home had just been burned to the ground by the Terrorists, and that the Kliázemskis had had a fortune swept away by the wanton destruction of mining property in the Ourál within the last three days.

Faith had found a chance to slip Rupert's note into Countess Chernyatina's hand, and had seen the color flame into that dignified matron's face. She actually looked as confused as a young girl, and Faith thought that there was a special tenderness in the kiss she gave her at parting that spoke most encouragingly for Rupert's prospects.

At last the newly married couple were free to go to their own little apartment, where Avdótia Ilínichna met them on the threshold with the symbolic bread and salt, and Father Gavriíl stood within, waiting to bless the pair in the new home they were founding.

The door had hardly closed after the priest's departure, when the telephone rang noisily.

"It is a call from the editorial rooms," said Solntsoff. "I am sorry, Vyéra, but I shall have to leave you for a while. There is an important consultation at the office, discussing the position the paper shall take in face of the strikes and

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the latest Imperial Oukáz. Do not sit up for me. You need rest, poor child!"

"I give you to Russia," she said bravely; "I must learn to be an editor's wife, which seems to be almost as bad as being a soldier's wife."

He kissed her lightly on the brow, and left her with a murmured "God bless you! Sleep well!"

Faith dawdled over her unpacking and undressing. She wandered from room to room to see how her husband had furnished their modest apartment. There was an ante-room out of which opened Solntsoff's study. Next came the big, generous living-room, which must do them for both sitting and dining-room, then two small, adjoining bedrooms. These were all on the street and would have full sunshine. The bathroom and linen room, the kitchenette and maid's room opened on the large court. It was all simply but comfortably furnished. There were flowers everywhere, and the lights burned before the holy Ikons. Faith knelt and said a fervent prayer.

He had told her not to sit up, but she could not make up her mind to go to bed. The air seemed full of danger. She felt that she must be alert and ready for anything that might happen. She threw a loose robe about her and lay down on the divan in the living-room. But tired as she was, sleep did not come at once.

She had a vague sense of disappointment. Their wedding-trip had indeed been matter-of-fact. The semi-publicity of a train was not conducive to love-making, yet it seemed as if Lyóva had been unnecessarily self-contained. Even on a train a smile, a pressure of the hand, a tender glance,—surely such little tokens were permissible! But he had not even looked especially happy! In the privacy of their own home he could at least have taken her in his arms to bid her good-bye, but he had separated from her with merely a light kiss on the brow. She had held out her hands, expecting his

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embrace, and he had made no more response than a wooden image. It was indeed a matter-of-fact honeymoon!

Then sleep came and closed the wistful eyes.

It was nearly morning when the prince returned and softly let himself into the apartment. From the ante-room, through the half-open door, he caught sight of the sleeping figure on the divan in the living-room. He looked a moment, then he shivered slightly, and passing into the study, began to pace the room restlessly.

"I try to have faith, but I am eating my heart out with fear," he sighed. "One moment I reason myself into confidence, and the next I dare not approach her confidently. If I should try to caress her and she should shrink from me ever so little, I think I should go mad. She was free, poor child, and he loved her. He was no longer the old Youri, but a new, a repentant, heroic, suffering Youri, appealing to all that was tenderest and most womanly in her nature. Why should she have felt bound to me? Ah, Lyóva, Lyóva, shame on you! Any other woman would have loved Youri; but she was faithful to you, her first love, because she was not like other women, because she was herself, was 'Faith'! O, Vyéra, golden one! It is possible you still are a bit in love with your big Polar Bear, as in those happy days of childish affection and devotion? Does your woman's heart yearn a little bit for me on this night of all nights, when we begin our married life in our little home?"

He moved toward the door, then he stood still, his face darkened and a groan escaped from him.

"If I only knew! God help me! God pity my unbelief!" He sank wearily into the chair by his desk. As he did so his eyes fell upon the pile of letters, his personal mail, which had accumulated during the ten days of his absence.

One letter stood out prominently from among the rest, it was so thick, so covered with post marks. After many

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wanderings it had been claimed and forwarded from the Dead Letter office at Washington.

He began to tremble from head to foot. "His letter!" he exclaimed. "Now I shall know all."

So soundly did Faith sleep that the opening of the door from the adjoining room did not disturb her. But something more subtle finally aroused her, the call of heart to heart, and opening her eyes she saw her husband standing at the foot of the divan, the rosy light from the Ikona lamp full upon his face, which shone with such a look of joy and triumph as she had never seen on human countenance, though his eyes and cheeks were wet with tears.

"Vyéra, Little Comrade, his letter has come," he tried to tell her, but he could hardly utter words for emotion. "My own Vyéra!"

She held out her arms to him and he sprang to her side. Falling on his knees he flung his arms passionately about her and buried his head on her breast, sobbing like a child.

"He said it would make you triumph," she whispered.

"Oh, Faith, Faith, Faith!" he cried. "It has made me so happy, so blessedly, triumphantly happy! God is good to us, my golden one, we love each other so!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE WORTH OF A HEART

"Humbly before Thy Mercy Seat I throw
My poor soul, sick to death of deadly sin.
Father, I know Thou canst and hope Thou wilt
Release me of this burden. Pity me,
For Thy Son's sake let not my soul be spilt.
Lest from Thy fear I stray abroad in sin,
Restore me to Thy Fold and *lock me in!*"

—*Anonymous MS. of Sixteenth Century.*

WITHOUT, the spirit of revolution stalked through the city. Force was opposed to hatred, order to disorder. Men's hearts were full of fear and unrest. Constitutional government had been offered as a gift, but the misguided ones would wrest it with torture from the willing hands, and turn it to their own perverted ends. Malice led the strife, urging along the blind hordes of Ignorance in his train.

There were hurried councils. In one department a military governor was making his report to the Minister. The tears streamed down his face as he made it.

"The poor children!" he said. "They mean no harm. It is their ignorance. They go as they are led."

"I believe you, Youri Andrévich," said his High Excellency. "They know not what they do! It is those brains of devils incarnate that have planned it all, and they elude us and we must punish the poor children for following them. So, this is your report of the work of the revolutionaries in the — province. In the last eight days five mills burned, three overseers assassinated, eleven private estates sacked, twenty-one buildings blown up, four trains derailed, four firemen and engineers shot, seventeen soldiers wounded,

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four privates and two officers killed. On the other side three hundred strikers arrested, two inciters tried by court-martial and shot, forty men wounded in assault."

"The mills and railroad are now under sufficient protection," said the governor. "The fires are out, the revolt scattered. The difficulty is in policing the more distant properties. The men we have arrested all tell the same story. They had no complaint against the mills or the landlords; they were simply acting in obedience to orders. Many of the poor peasants wept as they told of the outrages they had been directed to commit."

The Minister sighed. "The firmest policy will be the kindest in the end," he said. "They must not become brutalized by the taste of blood. They need a master. If it is not the State they are made to obey, it will be some blatant demagogue. But when order is restored then we may be indulgent once more. Solntsoff's leader in this evening's paper is the most sensible word spoken in this hour of trouble, but no one will listen to it. Every one is down on him. He has incurred the wrath of the reactionaries because he does not wish the constitution revoked, and yet he is hated by the liberals and hounded by the anarchists on account of his ringing plea for strong measures in enforcing order. He is a marked man, I fear!"

General von Dovsprung left the Ministry with a heavy heart. What a land for that poor young wife to come to! If the Emperor's advisers would but keep their heads, all would yet be well. Holy Russia would not perish in a night. But these were dark days to live through. Yet he had faith that the storm would be easily weathered. The nation was sound at heart, the Gosudár would not readily give up his long-planned constitution, the loyal troops would soon restore order. A strong hand was all that was needed. There are always discontents, whatever may be the form of government, but to yield to them is a fatal weakness. Be

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it monarchy or republic, autocracy or democracy, it is the strong government that is respected.

He felt that he would like to warn Solntsoff of his personal danger, but there would be little use. Lyóva was a prudent man, who would not incur unnecessary risk at any time, but in the path of duty he was fearless. He would heed no warning, nor would he arm himself. There was nothing one could do but pray heaven to guard him, for his young wife's sake.

Dovsprung had returned to St. Petersburg from his long wanderings, to find himself a hero, the idol of the hour. The sally of the two devoted warships at C — had seized upon the popular imagination. It had taken the place in Russian hearts that the charge of the Light Brigade held in British tradition. Its survivors were honored and caressed, and none more so than himself, for he had gone not in obedience, but voluntarily into "the gates of death and the jaws of hell." He had upheld the ancient traditions of Russian warfare at a time when too many were yielding to the weak humanitarianism, the effeminate prudence which has naught in common with the things of war, but is preached from soft armchairs and luxurious firesides. He had held his life in light esteem where the glory of Russia was at stake, and Russia was eager to immortalize him. Honors came thick and fast. He was raised to the rank of general, he was received in personal audience by the Emperor and the two Empresses, he had held the little Naslédnik in his arms, orders and medals were bestowed upon him, he was cheered as he passed through the streets, men feasted him and women courted him. That he had returned to them emaciated, hollow-eyed and grizzled only lent, in feminine eyes, an additional interest and beauty to his romantic personality.

And through this siege of adulation he passed indifferent, unmoved. Russia's wounds, Russia's needs were ever before

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his eyes, while in his heart gnawed the torments of an unrequited love. When his country's internal troubles broke out, he asked for and obtained the difficult and dangerous post of military governor in a province where revolt had broken out in its fiercest forms. And here Fate had arranged that he should safeguard the home-coming of Lyéff Petróvich and his bride!

Youri Andrévich turned his steps toward the church of St. Catherine, the parish church of the Catholic Poles. He felt that he was not worthy to pray for others, he, with his weak faith, his doubtful hope, his cold charity. He could only pray for himself, he could only repent and beat his breast and say, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" And the merciful God accepted this prayer and had given him grace to sin no more. But the only way he knew to pray for others was to offer his life for them.

He entered the church and knelt in the shadow of the aisle before the chapel of the Sacrament. Drawing forth from under his collar Faith's golden chain, he kissed it passionately, then, signing himself with the cross, he looked upward. Over the altar was the picture of the Saviour, the thorn-crowned Christ, His pierced Heart outwardly represented as surrounded by flames, burning with Love for the children of men. Underneath the picture were inscribed the words, "*My son, give Me thy heart!*"

"My heart!" repeated Dovesprung, and in his memory resounded the echo of Faith's pleading words to him, "Heaven wants your heart, fling it to the heaven that is leading you!" "That poor thing that calls itself my heart!" he thought bitterly. "How can it be worth the giving or the taking?"

The years seemed to unroll before him. His boyish heart had loved and clung to his mother, his little sister, had loved admiringly his noble and upright father. They had died in his early youth and his heart had grown forgetful of

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holy memories of family and home. It had hardened itself and forgotten the principles and precepts instilled by conscientious parents. The ambitions, the successes, the pride of life, the maxims, the pleasures of this world had taken root in his heart, which had corrupted itself playing at sinful love with the weak, vain, worldlings of high life, until that fateful day when he had fallen so low as to insult the pure, loyal spirit of the young maiden whom Fate had doomed him ever since to worship in passionate, hopeless adoration.

The anguish of remorse, the humiliation of self-contempt and the sufferings of despairing love had cleansed his heart of corruption, and it beat once more in healthy harmony with the laws of God and man. But he felt that it did not beat for Heaven alone! It was for her sake he had repented; to live as she would have him live he had amended his ways. Seeing his past through her eyes he loathed and condemned it. Viewing life from her standpoint he strove to live worthily. If he now worshipped God and kept His commandments and received His sacraments, it was because the faith of his childhood taught him that it was through the strength of the supernatural that he must overcome the weakness of the natural, and so climb to the high plane where she, his earthly love, would have him live. But, alas! it was still for her, and not for God, that his unhappy heart was beating!

Suddenly he raised his head defiantly.

"My God, why have You denied me the lawful, holy love that I craved, that would sanctify me and redeem my life? I have turned from evil and tried to do good, and You have taken from me my last hope. Why?"

But even as he spoke he knew the reply as well as if it had fallen audibly from the pictured lips of Christ above him.

"I, the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God: Thou shalt have none other Love before Me! Give Me thy heart, and in the

measure thou givest shall Love be given thee; full measure, pressed down and running over, shall it be returned into thy bosom!"

Youri Andrévich stretched out his arms. "My God, I give Thee my life! Take it from me when Thou wilt, and in what way Thou wilt. I offer it to Thee that he may live. I ask not for hope or for reward, Thy will be done! But take my life for his, that she may be spared from shock and suffering."

Silent and deserted by all but himself the atmosphere of the church grew oppressive to the kneeler. It was as if the Christ looked unfavorably upon him, and cared not for his offering.

"My God, if it is Thy Will that I live and suffer, I accept life from Thy hands, I accept suffering. Forgive me if I have been impatient under Thy justice. Thou hast been kinder to me than I deserve. I give my life to Thy service."

Deeper and deeper grew the oppression and the silence.

"What is it that Thou wilt have of me, Thou Christ?" cried Youri Andrévich, desperately. "Why dost Thou plead so with me? Lord, I will follow Thee in poverty, I will sell all my goods and give them to Thy poor, and they shall pray for my sinful soul!"

The lamp burning before the Sacred Heart flickered. As the church grew darker, so its tiny flame lighted up ever more distinctly the words, "*Give Me thy heart!*"

"Saviour!" sobbed the kneeling soldier. "I have been too sensitive of my earthly honor. I have done scant penance for the scandals of my evil life. I have lived too luxuriously for a follower of the Cross. Dear Lord, I will give my body to penance, and beg Thee to accept my sufferings that these two beloved souls may be led to the Unity of the Church Thou hast founded. Send me pain and humiliation and

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dishonor to atone for my faults, but do not let them be prejudiced or hindered by my evil example."

Sharp as the sword that cleaveth soul from body, distinct as the lightning that darteth from one end of heaven to the other, there struck into his restless, dissatisfied soul the words:

"Though thou give thy goods to the poor and thy body to be burned, if thou have not Love, it availeth nothing!"

Youri Andrévich quivered from head to foot. His hands went up to his throat and unclasped from about his neck his greatest earthly treasure, the golden chain, the last link that bound him to a human love.

Staggering to his feet, he rose, stepped forward, and laid the chain upon the altar, before the shrine of the Lover of Souls. Then he sank to his knees and stretched his hands to heaven.

"Oh, my God and my All!" he cried. "I give Thee my heart! Thee only will I love, my Heavenly Treasure! Take my poor heart! Such as it is, it loves Thee, Thee alone and above all! O my God, I thank Thee that I can now say it. Thee alone! above all things!"

And in full measure, pressed down and running over, was Heavenly Love poured into his bosom, such Love as the mind of man cannot conceive, such Love as the heart of man can hardly know and live. God's saints have known it, virgin saints whose purity sees God in beatific vision even on earth, and penitents who love much because much hath been forgiven them, and that heroic host of chosen Christian souls who have gazed upon Him Crucified, and for His sake have left all that they had and followed Him! To them such vision of Love is given. Even in this mortal life they have their hour of Transfiguration. Men call it "Ecstasy!"

Through the long evening hours until the small hours of the morning, the last Count of Dovsprung-Zaozerski sat

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with his lawyers and agents, drawing up his will, and devising a plan by which even now, during his lifetime, his landed estates could be partitioned among his tenantry in a sort of peasant proprietorship, and his personal income managed for their benefit. The castle of his ancestors and its treasures would be sold, to aid in instituting technical schools, a free hospital, and an orphanage.

"And your High Excellency reserves nothing for yourself?" asked the man of business, prudently.

"Oh, I can live on my pay, like many a poor devil of an officer before me," laughed the count, as joyously as if he were coming into a fortune instead of giving one away!

His High Excellency, General von Dovsprung, left the capital the next day, after some hours of consultation with the Ministry of War and the Police, and returned to his post in the Polish province where his energetic measures had done so much to restore calm. On his route to the station enthusiastic crowds cheered him as he passed, and a group of distinguished friends accompanied him to the train, where his carriage was laden with flowers and offerings from fair admirers to their hero.

Two months later he was recalled to the capital and his resignation asked for. He was suspected of sympathizing with the Catholic Poles; it was known that he had consulted with members of the Polish clergy and also with certain local Hebrews in some of the measures he had taken. Though he had been eminently successful in bringing order from chaos, yet it was feared that he might in some degree have subordinated Russian Imperial interests to those of a local nature in so doing.

It was a hard blow to the soldier to be told to lay down his arms on the eve of victory; it was a keen hurt to the patriot and man of honor to be suspected of treachery. He had found the conservative Poles loyal to the Empire and

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eager to unite with it in suppressing anarchy and terrorism, and he had but met their friendly advances and encouraged them to unite and make common cause with the Empire in the suppression of disorder. But these were dark days, when men's minds were full of suspicions and fears, when one's foes were too often those of one's own household. The gallant soldier bowed his head and submitted to discipline. After some weeks' detention in the fortress of the Shlisselburg, he was tried by court-martial and found guilty, with extenuating circumstances. He was pardoned by the Emperor and set at liberty, but degraded from his rank in the army.

He went at once to the Ministry, to offer his services to Russia in any capacity, however humble, in which he would be permitted to serve. The offer was politely refused, and the Minister hinted delicately that Count von Dovsprung's health, never very strong since his exposure in the war, might be benefited by a residence outside of the Empire, as long as its internal disorders lasted.

When he found his way from the Minister's bureau to the street, Youri Andrévich hesitated. Now that he had been relieved of his command, degraded from his rank in the army and sentenced to indefinite exile, he found himself homeless and without means of subsistence. His estates, his childhood's home, with all the memories and relics of his parents, had recently been burned and pillaged by the Terrorists; and, even had it been spared, it was no longer his, since he had already put it in the hands of agents for sale and for the distribution of the adjoining lands among the peasantry, who had thus unwittingly destroyed their own fortune in wrecking his. Homeless, penniless, dishonored, he knew not if he had a friend to turn to among all who had so recently courted and feasted him. When one is in disgrace and trouble, a friend is hard to distinguish. Many avoided him, or, at best, greeted him coldly; others passed him by

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without recognition. None had been permitted to see him during his detention, and he was not informed that any had tried to do so, save the man he once had tried to wrong.

"I dare not call myself his friend," thought Youri Andrévich, "but I have appointed him as administrator of the lands that were mine, until such time as order is restored and the distribution can be safely made. Perhaps I should let him know that I ask this favor of him." He turned his steps toward Solntsoff's office.

Once more he hesitated. Before the office door stood a sleigh, and in the sleigh sat a lady wrapped to the eyes in furs. But the eyes! He could see those, although they were looking above him to the office windows and saw him not. It was Fidès, and she was waiting for Lyéff Petróvich. He stepped back, and slunk into the shadow of a doorway. Evidently they were going somewhere together, for the office did not close for another hour.

Faith was beginning to grow impatient. She was well wrapped up from the cold, and was usually very easy-going with Lyóva's irregular hours, for she knew that in the varied interests of his life there were many calls upon his time; she was in sympathy with his work, and adapted herself with cheery willingness to unexpected delays. But this special afternoon they really must be prompt, for Youri Andrévich was to be discharged from court at this hour, and they must be there to meet him and offer him the modest shelter of their little home. He had no relatives, no position, and had met with heavy financial losses in the destruction of his estates. They must not fail him in his hour of need!

There were few people passing. A dark figure slinking in a near doorway made her a little nervous, for though the worst of the Terror was over, yet the city was still under martial law, feeling ran high, and Solntsoff's policy had

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made him many enemies, especially since his scathing articles upon the recent student riots.

A fine-looking, bearded man in professor's dress, accompanied by a thin, fair-haired *kursistka** of eighteen or twenty, were coming slowly toward the sleigh. As they passed the dark figure, they, too, seemed to feel a little nervous, for they drew back, hesitated, then hurried forward a few steps till they reached the sleigh, where they lingered as if seeking its friendly protection.

Faith was filled with an undefinable fear. Lyéï Petróvich was just coming toward the entrance from his office. At the same time the dark figure started forward, and, dashing past the man and the girl, ran straight toward Solntsoff.

With a scream of terror Faith sprang from the sleigh, but it was all over before the warning cry was out of her mouth. The girl had pulled forth a revolver and aimed it directly at the prince's advancing form. In the same instant that the shot rang out, the dark figure had flung itself at Solntsoff and the two men fell heavily together to the floor.

The girl threw down the revolver and fled unmolested, for the employees who rushed out at the sound were too startled to think of anything but helping the wounded man. They pulled the dark stranger roughly away and flung him out into the street; then turned to the prostrate form of the prince.

How Faith reached there, she never knew; but she found herself kneeling by her husband's side as he lay on the stone pavement, white and still, his clothing drenched with blood!

She did not faint, nor scream, nor wring her hands. She seemed turned to marble. "It was too beautiful to last," she murmured. "God's will be done! I am thankful I was his happy wife for four blessed months!"

* Girl student of the University.

CHAPTER XXIX

ON THE MOUNTAINS OF FAITH

"All that I took from thee I did but take
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My Arms.
All that thy child's mistake
Fancies is lost, I have stored for thee at Home —
Rise! Clasp My Hand, and come!"

— Thompson, "*Hound of Heaven.*"

THE employees and members of the staff carried the still, white form into the office and laid him on the sofa. They cut and stripped off his coat and shirt, while Faith chafed the cold hands.

He opened his eyes, and made an effort to sit up.

"I am not hurt, Little Comrade," he muttered, bewildered.

A neighboring surgeon had been summoned, and now came on the scene. He leaned over the prostrate figure, feeling of his heart.

Solnstoff made a second and more effectual effort, and sat upright.

"I tell you, I am untouched," he insisted. "I was only a little stunned by hitting my head when falling," and he struggled to his feet.

"There is no blood on the undershirt," said the surgeon, after a hasty examination. "It is all on the outside clothing."

"It was Dovsprung's!" cried the prince. "It is he that was wounded. I recognized him just as he threw himself on me to protect me with his body. Go to him!"

The physician gathered up his instruments and ran toward

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the street. Solntsoff, hurriedly changing his coat, started after him, then turned back to his wife.

"Vyéra, this has been a great shock for you. Thank God that you see me unhurt, and think now only of yourself. You must drive right home and rest while I attend to Youri Andrévich and give him every care."

She flung her arms passionately about him. "I have you still!" she cried, "God is good to me!"

"I owe my life, our happiness to Youri, I cannot rest till I find him. Let us pray that his wound may be a mere scratch."

Faith's lips quivered. "We had meant to be so kind to him, and I did not even recognize him," she said, regretfully.

One of the employees, who had followed the surgeon, now returned with the report that Dovsprung had disappeared. The horses attached to Solntsoff's sleigh had taken fright at the shot and had run several blocks before the coachman had them under control. In the meanwhile a few excited passersby, believing the wounded man to be the assassin, had begun to haul him about roughly before the police arrived on the spot. After questioning the returning coachman, the police, convinced of the wounded man's innocence, placed him in a cab, directing the driver to carry him to the nearest pharmacy for aid. Then all had started in search of the fugitive girl and her companion. Apparently the cabman had not obeyed instructions, for none of the neighboring pharmacies had seen him. Probably he had taken his passenger to some hospital but, though several had been telephoned to, none reported receiving such a patient.

Solntsoff drove Faith home, and with many warnings to keep quiet and cheerful, left her to go in search of his preserver. The search was destined to last many hours.

The cabman who had been called to carry Youri Andrévich to the nearby pharmacy was a timid man. He had

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seen the first rough attack made on his passenger by the angry citizens, and he feared that when he should be out of sight of the police a second attack would be made. No sooner had he turned the corner than he quietly slipped off the box, rolled himself a little in the snow and dirt, and returned home with a story of having been set upon by the rabble.

The horse, an intelligent and a hungry animal, immediately turned and trotted to the stable, a few blocks away, from which he had been hired. The stable-boys let him in, and opening the cab door, discovered the bleeding occupant.

The grooms sprang forward and half drew, half led the fainting figure through the stable to a shed in the rear, and laid him down on the straw in an empty stall. They cut away his clothing and stanchd the bleeding with such poor means as they had at hand. A stable-boy was sent for the nearest surgeon, and at the wounded man's request another went in search of a Catholic priest. The latter arrived first, a Polish chaplain from the church of St. Catherine. He heard the injured man's faltering confession and administered Extreme Unction. His experienced eye saw that the Last Sacrament did not have the reviving effect which it sometimes produces on the physical forces, and that the man's hours were numbered.

"Have you any message? Is there any one who should be notified?" he asked.

"There is no one; I am alone in the world," whispered the sufferer.

"Not alone! The God of Hosts is with you," said the priest. "He was born for you in a stable, and here, in a stable, He now comes to visit His child in the Holy Viaticum!"

The dying man's eyes lighted up with joy unspeakable. "To me! Even to me! Emmanuel, my Redeemer!" he

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murmured. "Ah, Good Shepherd of my soul, Thou hast followed me even to the end!"

A moment after the Sacred Host had been communicated to him the surgeon arrived, examined the patient and suggested having him removed to the hospital.

"Let me die in peace where they have laid me," pleaded Dovsprung. "It is Bethlehem! It is holy ground!" His voice came slowly and with effort, as if the spirit were already far away and he could with difficulty recall it.

The doctor stepped aside with the chaplain. "There is really no use in moving him. We can do nothing. He is marked with death, but it was my duty to suggest it in case he desired to take the chance. He is far beyond medical aid. An assassination, no doubt. Have the police been notified?"

"He wishes nothing done, no one prosecuted," replied the chaplain. He returned to the dying man, and, kneeling by his side, began to repeat the prayers of St. Ignatius.

"O, good Jesus, hear me! Within Thy wounds hide me! Permit me not to be separated from Thee! At the hour of my death call me, and bid me come to Thee!"

"At the hour of my death call me!" repeated Youri Andrévich with gasping breath, his fast fading eyes lighting with sudden rapture. "Call me, even me, Jesus, my God! And bid me, Youri, Thy sinful child, to come to Thee! to — come — to — Thee!"

It was near midnight when Solntsoff returned to his wife, pale and agitated.

"Vyéra, we have found him," he said, taking her in his arms.

"And is he going to die?" she asked, low and tremblingly.

"He is giving his life for me, or rather, for your happiness, Vyéra! 'Greater love hath no man than to give his

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life —— ’” he broke down and leaned his head against her shoulder.

“Is there no hope?” she whispered.

“No, none. The bullet penetrated the intestines. It is only his great vitality that is keeping him alive so long. Everything has been done that is humanly possible, dear heart! Do not cry so, Vyéra! I know he would choose just such a death. If you could but see his face! It is absolutely joyful!”

She clung closely to her husband, “Oh, Lyóva, Lyóva! He is dying for us, and there is nothing we can do!”

He took her face between his hands and looked deep into the grave, true eyes. Then he kissed her brow and said tenderly:

“Go to him, Vyéra, my golden one, as his ministering angel, to pray with him, to sustain his faith, to accompany him to the Valley of the Shadow of Death. God willed it that you should be the unconscious instrument of his conversion, perhaps He wills that you should complete the work until this wandering son is safe in the Divine Arms.”

“It is not I that will sustain him, it is he that will sustain my faith,” she declared. “I have seen his repentance, his spiritual struggle, and now his holy end will teach me the last, greatest lesson.”

“We both have much to learn,” said her husband gravely. “I have much of prejudice, of stubborn, national pride to overcome. I asked him what I could do for him. I begged to give him some token of my gratitude, and he said there was only one thing — that I would try to examine with unprejudiced mind the question of re-union with Rome. He little knows what he asks of me! I have often felt the force of the argument for Unity, but, oh, Vyéra, all my most sacred feelings of loyalty and devotion are wrapped up in our Orthodox Russian Church! I feel that I should cease to be a

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Russian, that I should be a traitor to turn to another allegiance!"

"But it is only a return to the oldest allegiance of all," she urged gently, "to the unity of the early ages — all else is the same. Oh, Lyóva, we must become as little children! It is the only way to heaven!"

"He understood my struggle," said Solntsoff, "and he laid his hand on my head and said that even if I could never come to see it as he saw it, I must not stand in your light. That much I could promise, Vyéra. When you first told me of the step you wished to take, it was bitter to me. Hitherto my hand has led you. My Little Comrade, I have been your happy teacher in so many blessed lessons, love, religion, marriage, the hope of maternity — and now — oh, God forbid that our ways should ever separate! God keep us ever one heart and one mind in the Faith of Christ!"

His whole frame shook with emotion. Faith caressed him tenderly. No doubt many painful hours lay before them both. She must not try to force his convictions, but if once convinced she knew that he would hesitate at no sacrifice.

"Tell me more of Youri," she said, gently, as she wrapped herself in furs for the winter walk.

"Vyéra, he had already, even in life and health, arranged to divide his estate among his peasantry, and intended to labor among the poor and outcast in some penitential brotherhood."

Faith's eyes lighted up. "Ah, yes," she sighed, "that was beautiful. But this is more beautiful still, that he should give his life for the friend he had once meant to injure!"

"He has given his life for us. We must give him every moment that is left on earth, and our prayers as long as we both shall live. Come to him now, my Vyéra, and may God inspire and sustain you!"

But she hesitated and drew back. "Lyóva," she whis-

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pered, "at the hour of death he should be face to face with his God, no earthly memory should come between. I fear I might only disturb his peace — only draw his mind away from the things of heaven!"

Lyéff Petróvich looked down into the troubled face, so spiritual, so exquisite in its sensitive conscientiousness.

"Vyéra, I believe that as his mortal life nears its end he thinks no more of earthly love! He gave me a message for you — I do not know its full significance, but he said you would understand. I was to tell you that he was no longer wearing your chain, that he had made an offering of it to the Sacred Heart."

Faith slid to her knees. For a moment she buried her face in her hands, then she sprang up, her eyes radiant with reverent joy, and, holding out her hand to her husband, she cried almost gayly, "Let us go to him at once! My last scruple is so blessedly, so happily removed!"

Together they walked through the darkness and cold of the wintry streets. At the corners of the principal thoroughfares great fires were burning, where cabmen, guards and belated pedestrians gathered to warm their chilled extremities. From time to time the lamp before some sacred shrine cast flickering colors across the whiteness of the snow-embedded roads.

"The girl who shot at me has been captured," Solntsoff told his young wife. "She is one of the students' corps, but she declares that it was not her intention to shoot me, that she meant the bullet for Youri Andrévich, who had betrayed and deserted her."

"Oh, that he should be accused of that!" exclaimed Faith, indignantly. "He was never that type of man, even in his worst days. It seems as if he had had obloquy enough. But, Lyóva, you and I can disprove that. We both saw her aim directly at you!"

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Solntsoff shook his head sadly. "He does not wish to be vindicated. He will not deny her story."

"But he must, he should! It is due to his own manhood and to the honor of the poor, misguided girl."

"Of course he does not admit it, he simply makes no charges at all and has asked us to avoid giving our testimony. I had not the heart to go against his wishes. I promised I would let it rest there."

"I suppose he has some noble motive for silence?"

"It is partly because he thinks the poor girl will escape punishment, if sympathy is with her. Then I believe he has another motive, a supernatural one, that we can only bow our heads before," added Solntsoff. "When I was pleading with him for his honor, his fading eyes looked up at me so humbly, so sadly, and he whispered, 'Christ my Lord died as a malefactor; shall I be more careful of my honor than the Holy One of Israel?' Oh, Vyéra! how true it is that 'they love much to whom much has been forgiven!' What do I know of love? What do I know of humility, of sacrifice, I, with all my boasted virtue, in comparison to Youri Andrévich, the penitent? I am not worthy to loosen the latchet of his shoes!"

Faith pressed his hand in sympathy. "It is different, but it is, none the less, Love. '*If you love Me you will keep My commandments!*'" she quoted softly.

Hand in hand they entered the confines of the stable. Near the entrance the grooms were busily curry-combing the tired horses and cleaning the bespattered sledges, singing, laughing and joking at their work. Some had thrown themselves wearily on the floor, face downward, and were sleeping heavily as only a Slav can sleep.

Solntsoff took off his cap and bowed courteously to the men as he entered. They returned his salute with a cheery greeting, and, seeing a lady with him, stopped their laughter

and jokes till the two had passed through to the rear of the stable, beyond the reach of their voices.

"We can die but once," they said, with easy fatalism, "we must take the death that God sends. 'Eternal Memory*!'" and bowing deeply, they crossed themselves thrice, then resumed their work and their song.

Stooping their heads, husband and wife entered the narrow door of the cattle-shed. There, on a heap of straw, covered by his long cloak, they could discern by the flickering light of the lanterns the form of Youri Andrévich, his face gray with the shadows of approaching death, his lustreless eyes half-closed, the breath coming in short, painful gasps. By his side knelt the priest, holding the crucifix before the dim, veiled eyes, and softly intoning the prayers of the Latin rite for the departing soul. The dying man had sunk more rapidly than Solntsoff had expected. The majesty of the coming change had already stamped itself upon the pale brow. Overcome with grief, he who owed his life to this death, prostrated himself at the foot of the lowly couch and embraced the knees of the almost inanimate form.

Tremblingly Faith knelt by Dovsprung's head

"Go forth, Christian soul! from this world," chanted the priest, "in the name of God the Father Almighty, Who created thee; in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, Who suffered for thee; in the name of the Holy Ghost, Who sanctified thee. Dear Brother, may the resplendent multitude of the angels meet thee, may the glorious company of the white-robed martyrs and saints encompass thee, may Jesus Christ, the true Shepherd, appear to thee with mild and cheerful countenance. May He Who was crucified for thee deliver thee from torment. May He Who died for thee deliver thee from eternal death. May He absolve thee from all thy

* "*Vyěchnaya Pámiat*," the *Requiem Aeternam* of the Russians.

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sins and place thee among His flock. Mayest thou see thy Redeemer face to face, and, standing always in His presence, behold with happy eyes the most clear Truth, and, among the companies of the blessed, mayest thou enjoy the sweetness of the contemplation of thy God forever!"

Youri Andrévich opened his eyes once more.

"*Vyéruiu, gospodi, i ispovyéduiu,*"* he said, clearly and joyfully. "I believe in God, in His One Holy Church, in the Life Everlasting! Lord Jesus, receive my repentant soul!" His voice sank again, but he made one more effort. It seemed as if his spirit were already at a distance, and only his strong will summoned it back to communicate once again with the loved ones of earth.

"Fidès! Lyóva! Dear, faithful friends! This poor life is very little to give up! The other life is so near — it is so blest! Mother of God — at the hour of death — my Saviour's Voice — O God! I thank Thee — for the gift of Faith — without which — there is no — understanding!"

The gasping breaths grew ever fainter, farther apart. The minutes passed. Only the stifled sobs of the prostrate figure at his feet, and the softly chanted prayer were now audible. Then the murmured words ceased; the priest rose, and gently closed the dark-fringed eyes and laid the crucifix between the folded hands.

"Eternal Rest give unto him, O Lord, and let Perpetual Light shine upon him!" he prayed. "For with the Lord there is Mercy, and with Him is plenteous Redemption! *Kyrie, eleison! Christe, eleison!*"

Faith stooped to kiss the marble brow and brush back the sweep of iron-gray hair. "Sleep in peace, dear Youri," she murmured. "Sleep in peace, and wake in the Good Shepherd's Arms! O St. George! St. George the

*"I believe, O Lord! and I confess." The first words of the Slavonic Act of Faith.

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Victorious, you have triumphed over the world, and sin, and death! Pray for us, that we who are left may follow where Christ would have us go! And we will keep your beloved soul in everlasting remembrance, and our children after us shall bless your name!"

"Si iniquitates observaveris, Domine,

Domine, quis sustinebit?

"Cor contritum et humiliatum,

Deus, non despicies!"

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